

A GIFT FROM THE EAST



HAL CORRELL

~~Miss Van Orsdall~~

April 19, 1934

Othel Miller
1607 Kelsey Ave
Toledo, O.

my
mom

Very good work,

J. W.

x 24

A Gift from the East

A Story of Christ

By HAL CORRELL

Illustrated by E. C. Caswell



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FOREWORD

"A Gift from the East" was written by request. A story of Christ from the young person's point of view was desired. Christ himself was young, never did he become an old man; so his life and teachings should be of special interest to the young. He began with his message at twelve years, although there was a gap in which he set a wonderful example by preparing for his ministry, helping his family, and gaining experiences of life through his own and his neighbors' problems.

Out of the fifteen hundred or more authors whose names are listed on our files, Hal Correll was chosen to write this story. He has shown he understands the Bible and can write a fine story; his work has the finish of a much older author, but he presents his novel ideas in a clear graphic way from a young person's point of view.

Caleb, the son of Nahbi ben Naphtali, a jeweler of Jerusalem, learns of Jesus through a carpenter from Capernaum who comes to build a shelter on the roof of their home for Dorcas, his sister. Both Caleb and Dorcas are strangely impressed by the story and wish to know more about Christ. By praying as the young carpenter taught them, Dorcas finds strength.

At this time, in Rome, Decimus learns his friend Albus is grieved because of the death of one of his twin slaves. As the boys were Jews, Decimus promises to bring back from his trip to Jerusalem a young man to replace the one who died, as his Gift from the East to his friend, a close associate of Cæsar. His is a very difficult promise to fulfill he finds, and his adventures add a thrilling touch to the story.

Caleb closely resembles the dead slave; therefore he is sought. In this situation the strength of the Romans is shown in comparison with the utter helplessness of the Jews. Through a clever scheme Caleb escapes with Sargon, a wealthy distant cousin, and Abrim, a street waif. Their experiences impersonating Lazarus' slaves are amusing as well as enlightening. Their meeting with Christ is novel in as much as each one reacts in an entirely different way.

All of them wish to follow Christ and learn more about him. Abrim is disappointed, for Caleb, who has smuggled some jewels out of the city sends him back to Jerusalem to pay the publican at the gate. Because of this act Caleb's family becomes very seriously involved.

Sargon and Caleb see Jesus perform many miracles. At the height of these experiences a tragedy occurs, which changes everything for Caleb.

Sargon then finds that Caleb's whole family has disappeared. Not being able to locate Dorcas, Sargon realizes his great love for her. While Sargon searches for Dorcas, her mother, and her father, Caleb learns about slave life in a prison of the worst type. He is spared somewhat, but suffers many privations nevertheless. He watches with interest different slaves being prepared and sold upon the block; among them he sees some one he knows. With the help of a loved one and another follower of the great Teacher, Caleb escapes.

At a feast given in honor of Decimus three members of the family of Nahbi ben Naphtali are discussed, while Abraham, the publican, tells a story which excites the Romans' interest, especially that of Decimus. Finally Decimus makes an agreement with his friend which he never expects to keep.

Upon his return from a hurried trip to Jerusalem he astonishes his friends by his story. All his plans are changed.

CHAPTER ONE.

The Promised Gift



HE sights, sounds, and scents of the busy market of the cheese makers were enjoyable, for here, regarding not the fact that the place was named for only one commodity, came men, women, and children with all sorts of wares for sale.

On this particular morning everything seemed to be more engaging than usual, or so it seemed to Caleb, the son of Nahbi ben Naphtali, as he wandered down the slope toward the valley of the Kidron. The early morning sun made the dew on the cut flowers sparkle like the jewels in his father's booth in the bazar, and the breeze from the eastern desert was, as yet, fresh and fragrant.

Suddenly the young man stopped, a smile of delight on his lips. "There they are!" he whispered to himself. "I knew they'd soon be in the market! Won't Dorcas be pleased?"

He approached a sour-visaged woman who sat on the cobbles, surrounded by baskets of

fruits and flowers, and pointed to a leaf-lined little basket heaped with the season's first mulberries. "How much are those?" he inquired.

A glance at his expensive clothing told the woman that she had to deal with one of quality; therefore she toned her voice accordingly as she answered: "Take them, Sir! Let it be a blessing to me that I have given them." As she spoke, she eagerly reached out as though to lift the fruit.

Caleb, being wise to the ways of Oriental traders, hastily said: "No, no! That I cannot do, though your goodness is great, truly."

As though half persuaded, the woman dropped her hands and tried to look downcast. "Ah, Sir," she wheedled, "what is a matter of one penny between us? Take them, I beg of you!" Thus, in true bargainer's manner, she named her price.

As he heard it, Caleb looked indignant. "A penny! Why," hotly, "'tis a day's wages! And for so little fruit!"

The woman shrugged her shoulders. "A penny, truly, Sir! And a day's wages. But what will you?" Her eyes flashed in mock anger. "Wait we all year for the month, Nisan, to bring the warming sun and a hand-

ful of fruit; then give it to the first comer? Ha! Think you, Sir City Boy, that we fruiters gather money from the trees instead of fruit? We must live and get our prices, else how do we pay our taxes?"

"Well, Friend," replied the young man, turning to leave, "I'll not help you pay your taxes at the rate of a penny for that amount of berries!"

Remembering how Dorcas would be pleased to receive the gift, he returned: "Come, good Mother, for my sick sister I wish them. How about a *prutah*?" The woman shook her head.

"Two? Three?" continued the young man without success; then, with finality in his voice, "Four—or nothing."

"Ah, Sir," exclaimed the woman, drawing down the corners of her mouth, though she knew that she was receiving much more than she had a right to expect. "Ah, Sir, I cannot let you go without the fruit, lest your sister crave them in vain. Take them, Sir! Take them; I give them to you!"

"No, no! Though it is not enough, let me give you something for the berries. They are delicious looking!" Thus the bargain was closed, and the buyer and seller parted in

mutual elation. The youth saw in his mind the face of the beloved Dorcas when he took the leaves from the fruit; and the woman imagined her husband's pleasure when she took home copper with which to pay the Roman taxgatherer.

As the mounting sun made the streets too warm for comfort, Caleb did not loiter any longer. Shading the tiny, dew-wet basket, he hurried to the entrance of his father's house and mounted the outside stairway to the roof, thinking that by this time nurse Rebecca would have brought the invalid to the roof for a little fresh air.

Carefully placing the berries in the shade of a potted plant, the young man gazed over the city while waiting for the nurse and her charge to appear. Directly north of him at a short distance could be seen the roof of the palace in which Pontius Pilate, the procurator, lived when in Jerusalem. Off to the right shone the glorious temple, the Holy Place of Jehovah.

On either side of Nahbi's house stretched an unbroken expanse of roofs, for the jeweler found it advisable to live in this closely-built bazar of his craft when he was in the city. The roofs were furnished in more or

less elaborate manner, depending upon the prosperity of the owner, or upon his taste. Some were covered with flowering potted plants which gave them a bowerlike aspect, while others were merely equipped with seats for use in the cool of the evening. Between the individual establishments arose low parapets to mark the boundary lines, but these were not high enough to give much hindrance to those who wished to visit back and forth.

Nahbi's roof was one of beauty, for the owner had both taste and wealth with which to give it scope. Rare plants, carefully tended by the household slaves, were encouraged to bloom as in their native haunts. Under the branches of the taller ones were marble seats luxuriously cushioned, and on the roof itself the maids were even now spreading brilliant carpets that had been woven in some desert tent.

"Oh, there's Caleb!"

The young man turned as he heard his sister's voice. The nurse was just appearing from the court below, carrying the frail girl in her arms. "May Jehovah bless you, my Sister," greeted the boy, approaching and kissing her. Those formal words having been

spoken, he said gaily: "Guess what I found for you this morning!"

"Already? Have you been out so early?"

"Early! Long ago. Now, guess what it is. It is something you'll like."

For a moment the girl was buoyed up by the excitement of guessing; then she sank back on the seat where Rebecca had placed her, saying fretfully, "Oh, I can't guess, Caleb. I don't believe you have anything, anyway."

"Oh, yes, but I have!" He bounded to the place where he had hidden the fruit. "See! Still wet with dew!"

"Mulberries! Rebecca, look!" Caleb was repaid by the joy in her tones.

The nurse turned with a smile. "It was thoughtful of you to bring them, Caleb. It takes so little to give the child joy nowadays." The last words were uttered softly so that Dorcas, who was eating the mulberries, one by one, might not hear. The woman shook her head doubtfully, continuing, "Day by day she appears to fade away, Caleb. Nor do the rabbi's prescriptions do her much good. Perhaps today, though, he will be able to suggest something. He is in the court with your father now."

Caleb, looking over the parapet, saw the men approaching the stairway. A moment later they joined him and his sister, the rabbi muttering a magic formula as he drew near. "And how is my patient this morning?" he inquired, taking the girl's hot hand in his own.

Petulantly she drew it away. "I'm just as I was yesterday morning, except that I'm sickened by that prescription you told Rebecca to give to me!" She made a wry face at the memory.

The man smiled at her words. "Well, it had to be, Child. Have I not said incantations over you, and laid my hands upon your head? Everything else have I tried, now, but one thing. You," he turned to Rebecca, "will carry the girl to her room. There she must stay until the second Sabbath. The door and the window shall be shut tightly, and beside her couch you shall burn the ointment I shall mention to you later, letting none of the fumes escape. And then—"

"Oh, Father!" cried Dorcas, tears rising to her eyes. "Must I stay in that hot room all that time? And smell that vile smoke? Why can I not stay up here? Has he not made me miserable enough? I won't, I won't, I won't!"

Shocked at such disobedience, the rabbi glanced at the jeweler; but evidently he saw little there to indicate that his instructions would be followed. Growling under his breath about aristocrats who might some day come to sorrow, he stalked to the stairway and disappeared.

Caleb clasped his sister's hand. "Let him rage, Dorcas. Who is there in Jerusalem who can harm one of Nahbi ben Naphtali's family? No rabbi, at least, shall distress you with his vile prophecies. I'll—"

"Stop, Son!" Nahbi spoke as his son made as though to pursue the offending physician. "Who are you, Caleb, that you can boast that no harm can be done you?" Nahbi gazed affectionately at the straight, clear-eyed lad before him. "We are wealthy, it is true, but has it not been said that pride goeth before a fall? That being so, let us not be too proud, Son. Let us be humble in the sight of all men, and pray that Jehovah keep us from disaster."

Little did any of them dream of the dire fate that was in store for them during the coming months, or of the exciting adventures that Caleb would experience in attempting to

retain the wealth that now made him so confident.

“Well,” replied Caleb stubbornly, kicking at the carpet with his embroidery-covered toe, “he should not talk that way. And I don’t blame Dorcas, Father, for not wishing to stay in her room all the time! If she could be outside more—” He paused suddenly with a gleam in his eye. “Why, Father, why can’t we fix a shelter on the roof where sister may rest day and night! Perhaps she would become stronger then.”

“That would be good,” agreed Dorcas. “I should like it.”

“Very well,” exclaimed Caleb. “I’ll find a carpenter in the morning and bring him to do the work. May I, Father?”

“Yes, yes,” agreed Nahbi, whose mind had evidently wandered to matters of business. “Do as you like, do as you like. I must go to the booth, now, do as you like.”

His son and daughter bade him a loving good-bye, knowing that, though he was often overly anxious about his business, he loved them intensely and would grant any possible wish.

Caleb moved Dorcas to a long bench under a vine-covered trellis from which they could

gaze out across the houses and the Kidron valley toward the hills that faded away into the east where spread the vast desert. He seated himself beside her and told her of the morning's adventures on the street while she listened with parted lips.

"Down by the brass workers' bazar there was a group of the strangest looking men, Dorcas! Their skin was yellow, and their eyes slanted like this." He drew back the corners of his eyes. "They spoke a most barbarous language, too; but you should have seen the fabric they had! So beautiful and soft! A trader who said he could understand part of their language told us that the men were taking the goods to Rome."

"To Rome! It must be a wonderful place," whispered Dorcas. "Have you ever talked with anyone who has been there, Caleb?"

While her brother told her all he had heard about the great city of their oppressors, an event was transpiring there that would have a strange influence on their lives.

On a broad thoroughfare of the Campus Martius near a huge circus, stood the bathing place of Marius, who had grown wealthy through the patronage of the aristocrats of Rome. Here came the best blood of the world



"Where in all Rome is there another pair that equaled them?"

at some time or other, and it was considered to be the height of fashion to be seen loitering in the wide *vestibulum* during the early afternoon.

In this marble-floored space, Decimus Julius paced back and forth impatiently. From time to time he went to the entrance to look anxiously up and down the street, scanning the faces of the young men who drove past in their chariots or sauntered lazily along enjoying the sights.

Near by stood his nomenclator, the slave who always accompanied Decimus Julius to stand at his elbow whispering the names of persons who approached, lest the master should forget to recognize or recall the name of one who should be remembered. The man knew that if his master's impatience increased, the rest of the day was likely to be unhappy for him and for the pages who waited beside the litter on the street.

"Sir," said the nomenclator after a time, "the chariot of Albus approaches."

"Ah, at last!" Decimus brightened at the news, and he walked to the entrance to await his friend, waving his hand in salutation as the other alighted from his chariot and cast the reins to a slave. "I thought, my Albus,"

he greeted, "that you were lost, or that Cæsar had bidden you to his palace! Come, the rooms are full now!"

"Well, we need not hurry," remarked Albus calmly. He put his arm on his friend's shoulders, then explained his delay, "It was not Cæsar who kept me, but one of the pages."

As the inquiring look on Decimus' face solicited further details, Albus continued, "One of the twins died this noon, the ill-natured fellow! Where, now, will I find a mate for the other? And where in all Rome is there another pair that equaled them in beauty?"

"How sad!" Decimus was not saddened by the death of the slave, but by the fact that his friend was deprived of a cherished possession, for well-matched slaves to serve as personal attendants were as much prized then as two matched horses were in later centuries. Fabulous prices were paid for slaves whose beauty and grace would add luster to a patrician's *entourage*; and if two boys happened to closely resemble each other, their owner might demand his own price for them.

"Yes," sighed Albus, tossing his garments to a bath attendant, "especially when I wished them to stand by me tonight."

“Ah, yes! I had forgotten that Cæsar himself was to dine with you. It would have pleased him to have seen the boys. Perhaps you can find a mate for the other, however.”

“The gods surely never made three from the same mould.”

The two Romans passed from the dressing room into the *tepidarium*, where they loitered until perspiration started before proceeding into the hot room for their baths. Throughout the operation Albus was silent and distraught, not joining in his usual lively manner the conversation of the acquaintances around him.

While he and Decimus were being massaged before dressing, Decimus said, chidingly, “Come, come, Albus! What will Cæsar think if you bring to your table a face that looks like an unchiseled stone? Cheer up!”

“Do you think me a rich freedman, Decimus, that I can smile over the loss of a valuable slave?” He shook his head sadly as he spoke. “But that is not so bad if only I could match the other one! I had the handsomest pair in the city.”

“Don’t feel so heartsore about it,” urged Decimus. “Perhaps I can find you what you

want when I go to Jerusalem. Your boys were Jews, were they not?"

Albus nodded.

"All right. Let me take the remaining one with me, and I'll bring you his mate, or better. I had intended to bring you a gift from the East, and this shall be it." Lightly the words were spoken, though if there was a possibility of gaining that which he sought, Decimus would let nothing stand between him and it. That was not the Roman way. Roughshod the Romans rode over their subject nations, and the matter of seizing a slave more or less would cause no qualms of conscience.

Just as lightly Albus accepted the offer. "So be it, Decimus; although I'll not raise my hopes, for I cannot but feel that you will fail!"

"Done! I leave tomorrow. Send the boy to me in the morning."

As they laughed over the possibilities of the promised gift from the East, neither dreamed of the depths of wickedness into which the matter was to lure Decimus, nor of the sorrow and trouble it would bring to others. Still less could they have dreamed of the gift Decimus actually was to bring from Jerusalem when he returned.

CHAPTER TWO.

News of the Messiah

I WISH, Son," said Nahbi ben Naphtali, pacing anxiously back and forth in his booth, "that your cousin and his companions would soon arrive. They have been much too long on their journey."

As he stopped walking to look out at the busy street throng, Caleb glanced up from the shallow table of sand whereon he had been figuring. He realized that much might have happened to the delayed travelers; he could understand his father's anxiety, for Adab, the Assyrian trader in charge of the traveling group, carried a vast treasure of jewels for Nahbi. If any of the many bandits along the coast or in the boundless deserts should suspect this fact, there would be extreme danger for the little company.

The expected cousin, Sargon, was of so distant a relationship that in many nations no relationship would be said to exist; but with the clannish Jews the most distant cousins were recognized and cherished as members

of the family. Thus it was with Sargon, whose father had in his own youth gone to distant Babylon, to establish himself in business in the great Jewish section of the city. Lately he had decided that Sargon should visit the great marts of the West and then stay for a time with his "uncle" in Jerusalem, in order to learn the traditions of the great city of his ancestors.

For that purpose the willing son had set out under the protection of resourceful Adab and had gone across the trackless deserts to Damascus, thence to the magnificent city of Cæsarea Philippi in the north of Galilee, and across the mountains to Tyre, on the Great Sea (the Mediterranean). From there he and his companions had swung north to the magnificent Antioch, to Athens, and to Rome before boarding one of the slave-driven seagoing vessels for the journey to Cyrene and Alexandria.

In the sand before him Caleb saw visions of the foreign cities, and his mind wandered over the route of Sargon's travels. He longed for an opportunity to make the same journey himself. After a few moments he roused himself. "Well, Father, it is not strange that

they tarry! How wonderful it must be to visit foreign cities!"

"Perhaps they are not to be blamed, exactly, though Adab sent word from Cyrene that he would leave Alexandria in time to reach here for the Passover. It is strange that we hear nothing further!"

"Oh, he and Sargon are safe enough, I'm sure," cheered the son. "They will travel on one of the Roman vessels to Joppa, and along the military road to Jerusalem. Bandits will fear to molest them."

"Ah, yes," commented Nahbi, shaking his head doubtfully, "but how about the Romans themselves?"

"Why, Father! Do you mean—"

Nahbi looked at his son with keen eyes; then he nodded. "Yes, I mean that perhaps the Romans themselves would not hesitate to seize Adab and his companions if they knew the rich merchandise they carry!"

"Would they dare! I wish—"

"Hu-s-h, Caleb!" whispered Nahbi emphatically. "No more! Who knows who may listen, or who may carry tales? As for daring, have they not proved what they will do? Have they not by false witness deprived more than one of my friends of his business

because his wealth was coveted? Have they not wrongfully seized our sons and daughters and sold them into shameful slavery? Dare! My Boy, have a care, do not tempt them to showing their power!"

"Very well, Father, but they will not bother us. Do we not live quietly and righteously? What reason could they have to bother us?"

The man merely shrugged his shoulders. He did not see fit to go into details about the many crimes of which he knew. Why give the young man such thoughts to ponder upon? Youth was a time for happiness.

Caleb pushed the table of sand from him, neatly laying aside his stylus and smoothing board. "I think I'll go to find a carpenter, Father, as I promised Dorcas."

"Very well, but do not remain too long on the streets, Caleb. I like it not that you be seen too much in public places, and there are too many temptations." He watched his son with pride as he prepared to go forth.

The slim, erect form was covered by a tunic of the finest linen, but all other clothing had been laid aside for comfort while working. Now the young man donned his exquisite girdle and a mantle with different colors

woven into a striped design. A length of finest white linen was gracefully draped around the head to form a turban, with the ends hanging over one shoulder. Truly the young man was a picture to make any father proud!

Bidding Nahbi an affectionate adieu, the youth sauntered forth. Down the Street of the Jewelers he went, to the great highway that led to the temple. Here the crowd was dense, for thousands upon thousands of pilgrims were arriving for the great feast.

To amuse these throngs, and to reap a harvest of gold, mountebanks of all descriptions had come to the city. At the corner nearest Caleb a crowd of curious spectators had stopped to watch a ferocious-looking blond man who gave barbarous commands to a shaggy bear that accompanied him, attached to the end of a chain. Caleb, too, stopped to look, just as boys of all ages stop to watch similar sights.

Satisfied, after a time, the young man proceeded on his way, giving only passing heed to the cries of those who would attract auditors. A short distance ahead of him, seeing a young man wearing a carpenter's apron and carrying a kit of tools, he hurried to overtake the stranger. "Sir," exclaimed Caleb, touch-

ing the carpenter on the arm, "I have a work for you. Can you come with me to my father's house?"

The carpenter turned, lowering his kit to the ground. His tanned face lit with a smile. "Of a truth Jehovah is with me! But this morning I arrived in the city, and already he has sent me work! To be sure I'll come with you."

"I," explained the boy, "am Caleb ben Nahbi. My father is a merchant in the Street of Jewelers."

"And I," replied the other, "am Korah, son of Levi, the carpenter, who lives in Capernaum."

Having thus introduced themselves, the two threaded their way through the crowds, walking side by side. It was no disgrace for the jeweler's son to rub shoulders with a workman, for among the Jews honest labor was honored.

Caleb led the way up the outer stairway to the roof of his father's house. "Here," he said, "I wish you to build a light shelter in which my sister may spend the nights, protected from exposure. The place need not be large. If you will secure what is necessary, my father will settle with the merchants."

Gladly the carpenter began his measurements; then he asked for directions to the various merchants. Caleb pointed these out before going down to join Dorcas beside the fountain.

Toward the middle of the next afternoon Caleb again went to the roof to see how the work was progressing, and for a long time sat in the shade watching Korah at his work.

At the hour of afternoon prayer Caleb rose to his feet, turned toward the temple, and began perfunctorily to recite the Shemoneh Esreh, as was required of every Jewish man, woman, child, or slave three times daily. One by one the eighteen sections of the prayer were rapidly murmured. So familiar were they that Caleb gave no heed to the blessed words!

“Blessed be Thou, O Lord, our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob, the great, the mighty, and the fearful God—God most High—who bestowest goodly kindnesses, and art the Creator of all, and rememberest the love of the Fathers, and bringest a redeemer for their children’s children for the sake of Thy name in love. . .”

On through the next six sections, to:

“Heal us and we shall be healed: . . . blessed be Thou, O Lord, who healest the sick of his people Israel.”

While the young man rattled through the prayer, he noticed the actions of the carpenter. The latter with the utmost reverence lifted his eyes toward the heavens and made a salaam that carried his black curls almost to the ground; then gazing upward so intently that he seemed to wish to pierce the clouds, he stood motionless for a few minutes.

Caleb, having finished his lengthy and burdensome recitation, turned immediately toward his companion who had resumed his work. “Fear you not punishment if you omit your prayers?”

Korah smiled. “I prayed.”

“But surely not the eighteen!”

Still smiling Korah replied: “No, my prayer came from my heart. It was not from my lips only.”

Caleb looked puzzled.

“Listen, my Friend,” continued the carpenter, earnestly. “Think you that Jehovah cares for thoughtlessly-mumbled words?”

That was a new thought to Caleb. He pondered over it for a few moments. “I never thought of that. I prayed as I have been

taught!" He picked at a cluster of flowers that hung beside him, as he thought. "Now that you mention it, perhaps God does not hear any prayers!"

Korah stopped sawing quickly, exclaiming, "Oh, my Friend! Think not that!"

"Well, the rabbis have been praying for my sister for months, and she's no better."

"She is sick?" Korah's tone was full of sympathy.

Caleb told of his sister's long illness and of the many exhortations that had been said over her. "And it has done no good at all! That's why I'm having you put up this shelter so that she can always be in the fresh air. It may help her."

Korah was regarding the other's face thoughtfully, as though considering whether or not to say the words that came to his mind. Evidently seeing promise in the countenance, he said: "Tell me, Caleb; have you ever gone to our good Father in prayer for her?"

"Why, no. We've paid the rabbis for that."

"Come, Caleb." Korah spoke as though making a sudden decision. "Come! Let us together ask our Father to heal and bless his sick child. He is full of love and tenderness.

Did you not just now thoughtlessly say, 'Heal us, O Lord, and we shall be healed'?"

Caleb felt a thrill of hope pass through him. The idea appealed to him. "Wait! I'll bring Dorcas; then we'll pray."

Caleb hurried down the stairs, calling to Rebecca to bring her young charge to the roof. Wondering, but willingly, the nurse did as he asked, though she stared in surprise when the strange carpenter stepped forward with a smile.

"This, Dorcas, is Korah, the carpenter. We are going to pray."

That was all the explanation Caleb made. Korah laid his hand gently on the girl's curls, lifted his eyes, and earnestly raised his voice to God, ending with the fervent petition. "O, our Father! We know Thy love! Day by day it is manifest to us in the many blessings that come to us. Now, we pray of Thee, if it be for her good, wilt Thou make this child of Thine well and strong again, that she may enjoy the things that Thou givest her. Amen."

Dorcas made no move while he spoke, but clasped her hands tightly. She had never heard a prayer like this. The rabbis chanted strange words, or said familiar ones so rapidly that she could not comprehend them.

“Sir,” murmured Rebecca, gazing in surprise at the young man, “where learned you to pray like that? It makes me feel—er—as though Jehovah stood beside me while you spoke!”

“He did! He is always with his people. As for learning to talk with him in this way, I learned from a carpenter with whom I worked for a time in Nazareth. He is now teaching the people in Capernaum.”

“Truly, he must have been a godly man,” commented the nurse.

“Verily, he is! He has been close to God, and God listens to him when he prays. Why, it is even whispered among many people that he is the Promised One.”

“What?” Rebecca almost screamed the word. “What? The Messiah?”

Dorcas stirred and raised herself to speak.

“Oh, Dorcas, Child! You must not!” remonstrated Rebecca.

“Let be,” reproved Korah. “If she has strength, let her rise.”

“But,” protested the woman, “for months she has not done so!”

“Well, have we not just asked God to give her strength? May it not be that he is sending her a blessing?”

Her eyes shining, Dorcas whispered, "I believe he is! See, Rebecca, I raised myself! Oh, let us pray without ceasing! I hope I shall be well again!"

Delighted, Caleb hurried to tell his father, but Nahbi ben Naphtali only shrugged his shoulders. "Have there not always been those who tried to trick the people, my Son? Messiah? If the Messiah should come, think you that it would be to earn a living as a carpenter in Nazareth? Not so! He would come in power, here, to the Holy City!"

Being thus discouraged, Caleb said no more; but during the following weeks he joined Dorcas and Rebecca in secret prayers that came from sincere hearts. Daily as they prayed, they felt a new understanding of their heavenly Father come to them; so much so that Dorcas said, "It seems to me that I've never truly understood all God is to our people, Caleb. I feel different, some way, within my heart."

"Yes, and you're feeling different outside, too, judging from the way you move around." Caleb spoke truly, for Dorcas had in the passing time gained strength. Now she could raise herself without much effort and could

she sat propped in her couch while doing a little embroidery from time to time.

"Oh, I am better, Caleb, and so thankful that Korah told us about the new way to pray! How I wish I could see and talk with the carpenter he told us about and learn all he knows of God!"

Nahbi approached in time to hear her, and his face grew stern. "Caleb," he said, "speak you of the man you said might be the Messiah?"

The son nodded.

"Let us hear no more of this man! No good can come to you from such a one. Let me hear no more of it!" With that Nahbi waved his hand as though to brush away forever a troublesome thought, little knowing of the great blessings this unknown carpenter was to bring to his family when the threads of destiny became snarled and almost broken.

CHAPTER THREE.

Danger Approaches

IN the age-old buildings of Jerusalem were many unsuspected and almost inaccessible nooks and crannies, one of which had been discovered long ago by Abrim, a boy of the streets who made a meager living by selling water to weary pedestrians in the hot streets.

The little embrasure had once been a door leading to a stairway but which now was walled up on its inner side. No one but an agile youth could reach it, and here Abrim stored his few treasures. Below was the courtyard of the wine shop of Gaius, a slave of a Roman soldier, who was permitted to conduct the business on a percentage basis for his master.

One of the regular customers of the establishment was a person whom Abrim most heartily disliked, Georgias. Many a skirmish had the boy had with the drunken Greek, but usually the man was so fuddled by wine that he was helpless before the swift attacks of the boy. Equally useless was it for him to pur-

sue, for the boy could dart around corners and up stairways with incredible speed.

Georgias' constant companion was one who won Abrim's hearty sympathy. This was a slender, sickly little fellow upon whom Georgias had bestowed the name of The Pest, although he was a gentle, inoffensive child whose liquid black eyes besought affection from passers-by. From the boy Georgias derived a very good income, as the child was afflicted with epilepsy, and when he was in the throes of his affliction, many persons bestowed alms upon the hypocritically weeping Georgias.

Today Abrim was perched in his stronghold gazing down upon the bustling scene before him. Foreign traders, just arrived in the city, came to seek old acquaintances; street vendors of all kinds, jugglers, slave girls from far southern lands, soothsayers, all here to entice coins from the patrons of the wine skins.

Off in one corner Georgias was slouched down against the wall, deep in drunken sleep. The Pest, fearing to move from his side, sat on the ground beside him, wistfully looking around for companionship. A sharp tap on the pavement drew his attention, and he no-

ticed a bean at his feet. Another fell to bounce away. All around the child looked, seeking the source of the bombardment. Ah, there was the culprit, Abrim. With a wide, delighted grin, Abrim motioned to The Pest to be silent; then he raised a hollow reed to his lips, and blew another bean.

Whenever the passing throng opened sufficiently to make it possible, Abrim shot. Some of the beans struck Georgias sharply enough to make him brush at his face or neck with his hand, as though to drive away troublesome flies.

The Pest was both amused and frightened. Suppose Georgias should blame him for this? Well he knew what the result would be!

Ah, a bean struck the tip of Georgias' bulbous nose, causing the man to snort in pain and anger. He opened his eyes and glared around wrathfully, to see the smiling face of The Pest before him. "Ha! Thou dog of the gutter!" He grabbed at The Pest, shaking him vigorously and looking around for a club.

"Oh, Master," screamed the child. "Strike me not! Oh, please strike me not! I didn't do it! I didn't!"

Snorting in disbelief, Georgias snatched a

staff from a passing mule boy; but before he could strike, the child stiffened and then fell to the ground.

Quickly the man's tones changed to wails of distress. Prayers poured from his lips, and pleas for assistance. In a moment he was surrounded by sympathetic onlookers. "Ah, Friends!" he cried. "See, it is thus a poor father is distressed! From his birth he has been this way, and no money have I to pay physicians. Ai, Ai!"

One after another coins fell at his feet. At the edge of the throng Caleb ben Nahbi, who had been attracted as he passed, stood on tip-toe to see what was wrong; then, hearing pleas for money, he pushed his way forward. "Here, Sir," he exclaimed, thrusting coins into Georgias' itching palm. The young man glanced uncertainly at the man's drink-flushed face. He wanted to say something, but hesitated. In a moment, however, he said, "If you will bring the child to my father's home where we can be in quietness, I'll tell you how you can have him cured. My sister—"

At that moment an unseen hand twitched Caleb's mantle. "Come, Friend," spoke a boyish voice. "Waste not your time nor

your sympathy. He doesn't want the little one cured, for then he would not have anything with which to coax money from the charitable."

Georgias turned to put to flight the boy who was trying to betray his secrets; but then came another interruption.

Two insolent slaves thrust the people aside to make room for their masters, who came close on their heels. Caleb started to withdraw, disturbed by the look which one of the handsome Romans cast on him; though he could not have explained his uneasiness. The Roman spoke, "Boy, stay where you are!"

Caleb burned with anger. How dared the stranger speak to him in that manner? The two Romans were even discussing him before this mob of people!

"See, Scipio, is he not like Albus' boy, Zosimus?"

The speaker was the one who had addressed Caleb. He drew his friend's attention to the young Jew, gazing superciliously at the young man as he spoke.

"Aye, he is, Decimus," agreed the other. "Like enough to be his brother; but what good will that do you? See you not he is a freeman?"

Decimus laughed scornfully. "Free! A Jew! Send him to Rome, and he is no more free than the rest of the slaves." He turned as he spoke, motioning to slaves who were grouped behind him. "Take the boy with you to the palace. We'll—"

Caleb waited to hear no more. Why they wanted to take him to the palace he knew not; but he did know that more than one promising young Jew had disappeared in recent years without anyone knowing what had become of them, and he did not intend to give any Roman a chance to smuggle him away to slavery.

"Seize him! Boy, stop!"

Thoughtlessly the crowd lifted their voices in answering cries so that in a moment the street resounded with their shouts.

Breathless and frightened, Caleb darted here and there, his very activity attracting the unwelcome attention he wished to avoid. Which way should he go?

"Here, down this way!" cried Abrim who had spoken to him before. "Hurry! I'll stop them!"

Gratefully, Caleb darted through the narrow alley, leaving the strange boy to do his best at stopping the pursuers. Abrim stuck



Caleb darted through the narrow alley, leaving the strange boy to do his best at stopping the pursuers.

out his foot and tripped the first man who passed, causing him to fall, and a moment later there was a heap of sweating, struggling human beings in the alley's mouth.

One lithe slave from Decimus' entourage leaped over the others and sped in pursuit of Caleb, causing the young man to run as he never had run before. Down one street and along another they sped, the young man intent upon escaping, and the slave determined to learn where he went.

Through the door of his father's booth in the bazar Caleb raced, panting for breath. Nahbi leaped to his feet in alarmed surprise. "Father," gasped the boy, coming to a pause, "the Romans pursue me!"

"What?"

Nahbi thrust the boy into a corner and strode to the door. "Nay, Son! 'Tis but one slave! What made you think it was the Romans? See, the fellow is passing on. Perhaps he was merely hurrying to reach some destination."

"No, Father; in the market two Romans stopped me, and one of them ordered his slaves to take me to the palace, but I ran!"

Nahbi turned pale. This might be serious. "Thank Jehovah that you ran well, Caleb! If

it is as you say, we might not have seen you again!" He drew his son close to him. "But what can these Romans want of you? Are there not many others already slaves, whom they could turn their eyes upon? Ah, here comes another!"

A shadow fell upon the threshold and a stranger stood before them. "I seek Nahbi, the son of Naphtali," said the stranger.

"Go, Caleb," whispered the jeweler. "Go to the roof to remain until I send for you." He turned to the stranger. "I am he. What would you have?" With some distrust he eyed the man's inexpensive garments. The stranger bore no marks of being a slave, neither was he a man of wealth.

Before replying, the man looked out of the door; then he said, "I seek pearls for my daughter's wedding gift, and I have been told that you can supply the finest in the land."

Nahbi looked in amazement at the man before him, trying to believe him. The stranger smiled. "You have heard of Salomon ben Gershon of Capernaum?"

Salomon, son of Gershon, one of the richest Jews in the nation! Who had not heard of him? Surely this was not he!

"Ah, you doubt me!" smiled Salomon. "It

is because of my raiment, is it not? But see!" He drew from the bosom of his mantle a tablet which he handed to the jeweler. "See, your own correspondent in Capernaum has sent this note to reassure you."

"Ah, Sir, your pardon," exclaimed Nahbi. Low he bowed to the newcomer, motioning toward a cushioned seat beside a table.

"Sit here, Sir, while I show such wares as I have, and pardon me for being curious, but why do you travel thus unattended and—and—er—."

Salomon finished for him. "Unattended and in garments such as these? Think you, Friend Jeweler, that I should be safe if the Romans knew who I am? Would they not squeeze me dry with road and gate taxes? Would not the robbers in the wilderness roads lie in wait for so rich a prey as I? Nay," he shook his head, "it is better that I travel thus."

While Salomon was explaining, Nahbi stepped to the door which led to the courtyard of his dwelling and called, "Caleb! You may come to me now."

Turning, he drew from his strong box, trays of glowing pearls, some in strings for the neck, others in nose or earrings, and many

others lying in their soft wrappings in solitary beauty. Caleb came to stand at the door, curiously regarding the stranger. Nahbi introduced them, and when the young man learned that Salomon was from Capernaum, his eyes lighted up. He did not speak, however, but waited patiently until the long matter of trading should be finished.

Salomon inspected the jewels carefully, but shook his head. "Beautiful, Friend Nahbi, beautiful, but no better than the jewelers in Capernaum have! Can you show me no choicer jewels?"

Nahbi's face fell. "Nay. These are all I have. Soon, however, perhaps this very day, one comes to me from Rome and other western cities. Perhaps he will bring others, for he knows that I can dispose of them."

"Ah, that is fine! It may be that he will have rare pearls that have come from the South, to Alexandria. I have visited the bazars there, and the jewels that pass through on their way to the imperial city are such as would make one gasp! Should your messenger bring such, let him bring them to me at Capernaum. They are what I seek, pearls for my pearl!"

He rose and approached the door, with

Caleb close behind, questions trembling on his lips. To the street the young man followed, forgetting possible danger. When he was out of his father's hearing, he touched Salomon's mantle. "Sir," he said deferentially, "father said you are from Capernaum."

"Yes, my Son. Have you friends there?"

"No friend, Sir, but I have heard of a man there about whom I should like to ask. I know not his name; but he is a carpenter." In a few words he told the little he had learned from Korah ben Levi.

"This carpenter taught Korah how to pray to the God of our Fathers, and Korah told my sister and me. We prayed, not like the priests have instructed us, but with our whole hearts, and my sister is nearly well! I would know more about this man. Think you that he is, truly, sent of God?"

Salomon gazed at the young man seriously, stroking his beard. Apparently he was pondering deeply. "Son," he said at last, "it must be Jesus, the Nazarene, of whom you speak. If so—"

Caleb anxiously waited for the man to finish, but Salomon kept silent so long that he said, "You know him, Sir?"

Salomon nodded. "Truly I do, and love

him; but as for you, mayhap you would better forget him. Long have I lived, and my experience tells me that this Jesus will bring sad hours to those who know and love him."

"How can that be if he is a man of God? Is he?"

"Does the Almighty Father not send all good men, my Boy? As for this Jesus, I know not. I know not; though he has powers that other men have not."

"Oh, tell me! Does he, as Korah said, have power to heal the sick? Will he lead us against the Romans and make of us a nation?"

The man was at a loss to know what to say. "Boy, you are old enough to decide for yourself. If your father permits you to come to Capernaum, you shall meet this Jesus; then you shall say for yourself what he is." Without saying more, Salomon turned and walked away, leaving Caleb to digest his words.

During the watches of the night Caleb wondered how it would seem to meet the man who might be the Promised One of Jehovah. On the morrow the thought remained in his mind until the sudden arrival of Sargon and his attendants put all else from memory.

Caleb was accustomed to luxury; but never

had he dreamed of displaying wealth in the manner of Sargon. Like a lord the youth traveled, with richly caparisoned camels and a retinue of servants sufficient to populate a village.

A hawk-nosed Assyrian preceded the train, announcing to the astonished jeweler, "I, Sir Jeweler, am your nephew's messenger, and bring you his greetings."

"What? Adab?" cried Nahbi, falling on the man's neck in joy. "Praised be Jehovah, who has guarded you through your journey! Long have I wondered about you, lest harm had befallen you by shipwreck or robbers."

"From Alexandria we came by caravan," explained Adab; "therefore, we were safe from shipwreck. As for robbers! Are not all the world robbers? Come!" He returned to the street with Nahbi behind him. Caleb, attracted by the confusion, followed.

As he appeared at the door, Sargon was about to dismount from his kneeling camel; but at sight of Caleb he paused, his mouth open, staring. Wondering, Caleb gazed at him. Sargon motioned, drawing the attention of Adab to the young man in the door. "Adab," he asked in surprise, "how came that slave here?"

CHAPTER FOUR.

Guests Arrive

C ALEB flushed with anger at being mistaken for a slave. He would have replied hotly to the arrogant youth on the camel, but his father motioned him to be silent.

“This, friend Adab,” inquired Nahbi ben Naphtali, gazing at Sargon, “is my nephew’s son?”

“Ay,” responded the Assyrian trader. “I pray you to forgive my neglect. So angry am I since leaving the gates of your city that I scarce heed what I do.”

He stepped to Sargon’s side. “This, Young Man, is the uncle to whose care your father sent you so many months ago, and into his hands, of a truth, I gladly surrender you!”

Adab heaved a sigh of relief, explaining to Nahbi, “Have you e’er traveled in strange cities with a headstrong boy? Rather would I travel to the far-south sea, through desert and jungle, than again be responsible for a young man in some of the wicked cities we have seen!”

Sargon laughed. "Uncle," he said, drawing himself away from Nahbi's warm embrace, "listen not to him! One would think that I indulged in all the vices of the Greeks and Romans!"

While he spoke, he and Adab followed the jeweler indoors, where Adab hastened to speak further. "Nay, not so, Sargon, but Sir Jeweler, it is no light task to guard a young man from some of the evils that lurked round about him. He needs now a young companion to show him about your so-called Holy City. I'm too old to keep pace with him."

Nahbi smiled and looked around for Caleb, who had drawn to a corner of the room, wondering if he would care for this cousin who mistook him for a slave. "Come, Caleb," said his father. "Greet your cousin."

"May God's blessings be with you, my Cousin." The words, however, came not with much sincerity.

Sargon looked rather crestfallen, realizing how his first words must have wounded a free-born Jew. He hastened to justify himself. "Cousin? Of a truth, I am grieved! Not intentionally would I offend by calling you a slave; but one like enough to be your twin traveled with us from Rome to Alex-

andria, and he was a slave, bound for Jerusalem. Seeing you, I thought you were he.”

Adab was gazing curiously at Caleb, and his nodding head confirmed Sargon’s words. “He speaks truly. This slave, friend Nahbi, was very like your son except, perhaps, in the matter of height. Methinks this lad is a trifle taller.”

Nahbi signaled for a servant, ordering refreshments for the travelers; and while waiting, he questioned them about their experiences. “Tell me, Adab, what was it that angered you so at the city gates? I hope nothing went amiss?”

“Ha! Why remind me of it?” The Assyrian’s eyes flashed, and Adab plucked angrily at his tightly curled, perfumed beard. “These Romans and their publicans rouse me to wrath every time I enter a city. What profit is there in trading nowadays? A tax is levied when one leaves a city; when one enters upon a new road; when one stops at a village for the night; when one again enters a city where there is a chance to do business!” On and on he raged until he was breathless. Sargon and Caleb glanced at each other and smiled. Not yet had they experienced the distressing busi-

ness of dealing with the tax-squeezing conquerors.

“Let it not cause you unhappiness, Adab,” replied Nahbi. “If the tax was on aught that you brought for me, I shall make it right with you.”

“Yes, truly, it was on goods for you, Sir Jeweler. Right glad am I to be rid of them! Your brother told me that any rich jewels, or curios, would be welcomed; therefore in Egypt I picked up for you this.” From a bag that hung suspended under his mantle he drew a necklace of magnificent pearls. Nahbi gasped in delight. “See! Was ever there a necklace like this, Sir Jeweler? Lift it.”

Breathlessly Nahbi took the exquisite pearls. “And it was this that caused the trouble?”

“’Twas this.” Adab touched a pear-shaped pearl at the lower end of the string. “This only. To be sure, I was angered when the publican named the tax; but it was worse when a Roman demanded that I sell him, forthwith, this bauble. It was the master of the slave I mentioned, with whom we traveled for a time.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, mayhap he thought he could talk me

down, but he found that he dealt not with a fawning Greek. In short order I set him down, telling him that if he wished the necklace he could buy it from the jeweler, Nahbi ben Naphtali."

"Adab," inquired Sargon, setting down a cup from which he had drained delicious fruit juices, "did you see the look he gave the publican when you mentioned my uncle's name?"

"No. I was too angry."

"Well, they had some understanding between them that means no good for some one."

"These Romans! What can we expect from them next?" Nahbi spoke in discouragement. "Why, 'twas but a day ago that one of them tried to seize Caleb, my own son, into slavery! To my very door they followed the boy!"

"What?" Adab stared in astonishment. "What? Seize a free-born Jew? I know it is done in the country when there is a good chance to make way with a handsome boy or girl, but in a rich city like this!"

Sargon wished to know all about it, inquiring eagerly of Caleb for the particulars.

Caleb told the circumstances. "I have not

seen any of them since. The one who accosted me was a newcomer in the city, whom I heard called Decimus. He—”

“Adab!” cried Sargon excitedly. “Hear you? Decimus! It was he who had Caleb’s double, and do you recall he said something about finding for him a mate to send as a gift to Rome for a friend?”

The Assyrian gazed at Caleb as though remembering a fact almost forgotten. “Ah, this is worse than I would have dreamed! The slave and Caleb might have had the same parents. A good pair they would make to attend a Roman noble, truly!” He pinched his lip, gazing at Caleb with his beadlike eyes; then he turned to Nahbi. “Friend Jeweler, I would be alone with you for a few minutes.”

Somewhat surprised, Nahbi led the way to the upper room, which, as in all better Oriental houses, was over the main entrance and reached by a private stairway. He motioned Adab to a seat and stood regarding his visitor curiously.

“Know you, ben Naphtali, what I would do if yon boy were my son?”

Nahbi shook his head. “No. What would you do? And why would you do it?”

“Let us consider the why first,” began

Adab thoughtfully. "You have just told how a Roman desires your son for a slave. I have told you the probable reason. A pair of well-matched slave boys is well-nigh priceless; and if this Decimus could send his slave and your what-you-call him, Caleb, to his noble friend, it would put him high in that friend's esteem; and if that friend is close to Cæsar, ha! See you what it would mean to our friend, Decimus?"

Nahbi nodded, his brow drawn.

"Now, as to what I should do," resumed Adab, pacing back and forth on the beautiful tiles of the floor. "I'd send the boy out of Jerusalem at once. At once!"

"But," expostulated the jeweler, "what can they do? I'll keep the boy close, and he will be safe."

"Ay?" The Assyrian raised his brow skeptically. "Suppose Decimus enlists the governor's aid? It would do the governor no harm, would it, to help one who might speak a friendly word in Rome?"

Nahbi kept silent. Adab gazed out over the roof for a moment before continuing. "And might they not trump up some charge against you by which the boy could be taken? Nay, by which you might be sent to the galleys?"

Nahbi shuddered. The words were true. Worse evils had been done in the name of Roman justice.

"It is the boy who is wanted. Send him away for a time until this Decimus forgets about him."

"Send him away! But where? Never has he been from my own roof."

Adab laughed harshly. "'Tis time, then! Almost a man is he, and it is fitting that he should have a chance to fend for himself. Never fear, Friend Jeweler! Set him adrift to fend for himself, and he'll find friends, and ways to care for himself."

"Come," agreed Nahbi. "Come, let us make plans. You speak words of wisdom, and I thank the Almighty that you came in time to be of aid to us. What shall we do? Who can move a Roman to mercy?"

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"Water! Fresh water from the springs! Who will buy water?" Abrim sauntered slowly down the Street of the Barracks, his nearly empty water jar slung on his back. He had long ago discovered that water from a clean jar tasted better and sold more readily than from a dubious looking skin; therefore,

he profited by that knowledge and carried the largest jar he could manage.

“Water? Fresh water?” He paused before a group of bronzed traders who crouched in the shade of an awning. Strange of feature and garb they were, though that was nothing unusual in Jerusalem. Their bronzed faces were covered with coarse black hair that curled tightly, and oily locks straggled down from their turbans.

Like all traders, whose business requires them to deal with men speaking different languages, these men knew enough Aramaic to understand the boy’s cry; and Abrim, like all boys of his day, knew, besides his own language, some Greek. Altogether, he and the men knew enough to carry on a more or less satisfactory conversation. One of the men replied to his cry. “Yea, I’ll have water. Do you pour long and steady!”

Deftly Abrim raised the jar to his shoulder, tilting it so that a tiny stream poured into the waiting mouth of the trader. After a time the man motioned that he had sufficient. He wiped his face with the back of his hand, sighing. “Ah! ’Tis good, Boy! Here!” He tossed a coin that was neatly caught ere it could touch the ground. The man smiled,

tossing another. "Yes," he continued, "it was good. When one spends months at a time in the desert, Boy, fresh water is a drink fit for the gods!"

Abrim squatted beside the speaker. "Tell me," he begged, "of your adventures. There is much fighting in the desert places? And adventure?"

"Ha, ha! Ali, the boy asks if there is adventure and fighting!"

"Ho, ho! Tell him, Hosain, of the last one we had at the ford of the Jordan. That was exciting enough."

Nothing loath, Hosain settled himself against the wall and began a tale sufficiently exciting to please any boy.

"And it was there that The Leopard finished his life's course," concluded Hosain, looking at Abrim for applause.

Instead of applauding the tale, the boy wanted further details. "Who is The Leopard?"

"Why, he is a deceitful, thieving, throat-cutting renegade Roman from the gods only know where!" came the disgusted reply. "None could trust him for a moment; though," he added as a thought seemed to

occur to him, "he had certain good points, too. Eh, Ali?"

Ali grunted an assent. Hosain was silent for a moment, toying with an evil-looking knife that doubtless had come from the famous bazars of Damascus.

"Ay, he had his good points," murmured Hosain. "Now, he would be just the man, Ali, to make away with this boy."

Abrim leaped to his feet, causing Hosain to grin. "Never fear, Little Water Jar," he said. "'Tis not such small fry as you I mean."

Somewhat reassured, Abrim resumed his position beside the men. He might learn something useful if he listened.

"Yes," resumed Hosain, "if The Leopard was, as I suspect, a *fugitivus*, he might have won remission of the runaway's penalty if he could have helped out on this job. Methinks the boy cares not to have his forehead branded and to wear a collar welded to his neck for the remainder of his life."

After a few minutes' silence, Abrim offered another drink, speaking while he poured. "Who is the boy you want? Can I direct you?"

Hosain again wiped his mouth. "No, we need no help. His father's dwelling is known

to us. Jewelers are not so plentiful that they are unknown to the public."

Abrim moved away, not giving much thought to the man's remarks; but later in the afternoon, a sudden idea came to him. There was the friendly young man who lived in the Street of Jewelers. He had often greeted Abrim, and had once paid him to go to the market for a basket of fruit. Abrim wondered if that could be the boy Hosain meant. If so, what was plotted against him? Could it have any bearing on the wild race in which Abrim had helped the young man escape from the market place when pursued by the slaves of the Roman? It would do no harm to pass that way to see what was going on; therefore, having disposed of his last drink of water, he sauntered through the narrow streets toward the contemplated destination.

Dusk was falling. Few people were on the side streets through which he passed. He whistled an air which the flutists in the market place played, dreaming of the adventures he would have some time when he had a booth in the fruit bazar.

Yes, he decided, he would own a racing camel, which would bring him cold water

from the spring which fed Solomon's Pools, and he would make cold drinks for those who paraded up and down in the late afternoon. Growing rich, he would buy his own orchard and raise his own fruit.

A harsh voice in the shadow of a tree which overhung a wall at the corner roused him, causing him to gaze intently at the men who loitered there with two camels. They were Hosain and Ali, and there, just a short distance beyond, was the home of the young man Abrim had in mind!

Appearing to give no heed to the loiterers, Abrim passed them, his wits at work. What should he do? To be sure, it was none of his business what happened to that jeweler's son; still the young man always had a pleasant word of greeting.

Abrim made up his mind quickly. Casting a look over his shoulder to see whether or not the men observed him, he darted into the door; but inside he paused in surprise when he saw how festively the court beyond was decorated. Poor boy! So wild had been his existence that he had never seen a home prepared for the Passover! He did not even know that this was the eve of that sacred day.

As the weather was warm, the table had

been spread beside the fountain in the court, and flowers and fruits were heaped upon it. The Sabbath lamp burned brightly, and the members of the household were gathered about waiting for Nahbi to return from the synagogue to give them his blessing.

Rachel, his wife, was giving a last inspection to all the appointments while listening with a gentle smile to some gay comment that Dorcas made. Rebecca, the girl's nurse and personal attendant, hovered in the background, somewhat anxious lest the girl overdo herself so soon after her recovery. As she gazed at the fair girl, she murmured thanks to Jehovah that the carpenter had taught them how to pray for her so that her sickness left her.

While yet the street boy peered silently at the touching scene, a voice behind him said, "May Jehovah bless you, and make his face to shine upon you."

Abrim turned. The kindly voice thrilled him.

In the doorway stood Nahbi, accompanied by Caleb and Sargon, who had been with him to worship. Nahbi continued, "Whom seek you?"

Abrim pointed toward Caleb. "Him. I—

er—some men—” He hardly knew how to tell his story; but Nahbi’s friendly eyes encouraged him to tell all he feared. The men listened in amazement.

“There!” exclaimed Sargon. “Did Adab not say those Romans would cause trouble? I know that those low-born—”

“Tut, tut, Sargon!” sternly chided Nahbi. “Remember the Sabbath! And would it be right at any time to speak so on mere suspicion?” He led the way into the court, saying cordially to Abrim, “Come, Boy. The Lord has bountifully provided for our Sabbath feast, plenty for you and any who will come.”

Shyly Abrim followed, standing in the background as Nahbi ben Naphtali reverently laid his hands upon the heads of his loved ones, beseeching Jehovah to bless and care for them. The servants were blessed, and sincere thanks given for the bounteous food that awaited them at the table. Adab stood at the far side of the court, watching and thinking.

With a cordiality equaling his father’s, Caleb drew Abrim into the circle and to a place at the low table, pulling the stranger down beside him on the couch. Soon these two and Sargon were busily engaged discuss-

ing the wonders that Sargon had seen in his travels; while their elders talked in low tones of their own affairs.

Into this quiet scene came a rude interruption. A thundering knock came upon the outer door, which a servant had locked when Nahbi came in.

In surprise, those at the table looked at one another. Dorcas uttered a low cry, seizing her mother's hand. Nahbi rose quickly to his feet, a look of inquiry on his face. Adab, the ready traveler, accustomed to all kinds of adventures, dropped his hand to the dagger that always hung in his girdle. With flashing eyes Sargon stepped in front of Dorcas, who gave one shy look of admiration before burying her face in her mother's shoulder.

"Open! Open, in the name of Cæsar!"

"Cæsar!" Nahbi whispered the word with pale lips, his eyes seeking those of the trader.

"What said I?" inquired Adab in a low tone. "There's trouble! They mean to have your son, Friend Jeweler! 'Tis well we prepared for this emergency!"

Nahbi motioned to the keeper of the door. "Talk to them. Delay them! We must have time! Caleb!" He turned toward his son, to whom, that afternoon, he and Adab had out-

lined a plan to be followed in an emergency.

“Caleb, my Son! The time has come.”

Caleb nodded, too excited for words.

“Quickly, then,” urged his father. “Bid your mother and sister farewell and go.” He clasped his son to him, his lips moving in prayer.

While the boy kissed his mother and Dorcas, Nahbi hurried to a strong chest and removed a packet which he thrust into the boy’s hands.

Caleb darted into his room, only to return a moment later with a small bundle and a dark mantle. He bounded up the steps to the roof and disappeared.

CHAPTER FIVE.

A Race through the Night

OPEN!" Again came the angry voice at the doorway of Nahbi ben Naphtali's dwelling. "Open! In the name of Cæsar!"

Nahbi glanced at his wife, making a slight motion which she understood. "Wife," he said softly, "do you go with the women to your apartments. And give heed—all of you!" He glanced sternly around at the faces of his household. "Remember the saying of old, 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.'"

They understood. The Romans were not to learn of the flight of the young master; though the servants themselves did not know why nor where he went. How could they suspect that the Romans sought him to do him ill?

"Aaron," said Nahbi, turning to the door-keeper, "open to them. Adab, will you come with me into the shop?"

The Assyrian trader followed his host into

the large room which served as a salesroom for the jeweler's wares, and stood in the background, his hand still on the handle of his dagger. Not so peacefully would he have listened to the intruders battering on his door!

Nahbi heard the women hastening to their portion of the house as he stationed himself near the door, a lamp casting its flickering rays over his stern face. "Open, Aaron!"

An instant later a Roman soldier, with several civilians behind him, stepped into the room. He glanced around haughtily. "You are Nahbi, son of Naphtali?"

The jeweler nodded.

"I am sent to require of you one Zosimus, a slave who has fled from his master, the noble Decimus."

In the shadow of the background Adab drew in his breath. "Ah! That's the way they plan to secure the boy, is it?"

The plot was simple. Because of the striking similarity in their appearance, Decimus hoped to keep Zosimus out of sight and seize Caleb, claiming the jeweler's son as the runaway slave! With the well-mated pair, he could win the high favor of his friend, Albus, by sending the boys to him in Rome. A pret-

ty plot, truly! Adab nodded silently in admiration. It was worthy of an Assyrian!

Nahbi stared at the Roman in surprise, not comprehending the vile scheme. "What mean you? No *fugitivus* has sought shelter in my house, Roman! Though if he had—"

The soldier laughed harshly, moving toward the private quarters of the house. He finished the jeweler's sentence as best pleased him. "If he had, you, being a Jew, would shelter him to spite the Romans. Eh? Well, we shall look about. Men, miss nothing!"

Waiting for nothing further, and knowing that a Jew would not care to make an uproar lest he bring greater trouble upon his defenseless home, the men scattered. They dared not molest locked chests, but when they came across an easily-carried object that might be sold for a few coins, they hesitated not to thrust it into their girdles.

From top to bottom of the house they went. With pale face Nahbi heard cries of fright from the women. Adab muttered in his beard, calling upon his heathen gods to strike down the searchers. Nahbi's pious soul would have shrunk within him if he could have heard.

In a short time the men returned to report

to the soldier, who had remained in the court tormenting a brilliant parrot that shrieked in anger from its perch. "Sir, there is no boy here. Nothing but women and old men."

Nahbi glanced in surprise at Adab. He had not yet missed Sargon and the boy from the street. Adab, probably suspecting where the boys were, merely raised his eyebrows; then he shifted his attention to the intruders, who had spied the bountifully prepared table and turned their activities toward it.

Adab said nothing so long as the men took only food; but when he saw one of them pounce upon a locket which Dorcas had left lying at her place, he leaped forward. His hand flashed upward, then down; and a howl of surprised anguish broke from the thief.

Nahbi started forward, and the soldier turned from the bird.

"Thieving dog!" snarled Adab, his glossy beard bristling with rage. "You would take the child's finery! Eh?" He laughed coldly. "Take it! 'Tis yours if you can lift it!"

The man responded with a flow of words that made Nahbi's blood run cold; and upon looking to see what kept him from throwing himself upon Adab, Nahbi saw with a shiver

that the Assyrian had pinned the man's hand to the table with his dagger!

"Lift it!" sneered Adab. "No, you cannot; can you? Nor will you steal with that hand again for some time to come! Now, You!" he whirled upon the Roman soldier. "Now you! You find not what you seek, get you gone! I am no Jew! I fear you not! From this hour this is my house. Come not here again!"

The soldier would have blustered, but with blazing eyes Adab motioned toward the door. "Get you gone!"

Nahbi sank to a seat, trembling with apprehension. How rash Adab was to act thus! It was easily seen that he did not realize the power of the Romans, nor the lengths to which they would go to attain their ends.

"Come, come, friend Nahbi," cheered Adab when the door was closed and locked. "Look not as though your end had come! This day I'll pay you for the property; then I dare them to come again! If you keep it, you have no recourse against their invasion; but I'll sell it back to you when you will. Come, let us eat."

Nahbi glanced at the table where the food had been touched by the Romans. "Not so," he said. "It is unclean! As for the money, it must wait, Adab, until later. Remember you

not that this is the Sabbath? And on this Holy Day my son is on the highway, traveling!"

"Well, he'll not travel far before day-break," observed Adab, "nor is there much to fear. He has company, I know."

"Why, what mean you?"

"Sargon," came the brief answer, "and mayhap that street boy you found here when we returned from the synagogue. They followed Caleb while we went to admit the Romans."

"Is it so?" Nahbi was somewhat relieved. "Perhaps, then, there will not be so much danger."

Adab laughed. "Danger! If there is, Sargon will know how to act. Think you, Sir Jeweler, that the boy traveled all over the world with me without learning how to fight! Ha, ha! There you mistake! Why, on the desert between Babylon and Damascus—"

When the Roman soldier first demanded admittance and Nahbi thrust a packet into his son's hands according to a prearranged plan, Caleb bounded up the stairs to the roof with a prayer to Jehovah to guard him and save him from harm.

Past the booth which the carpenter from Capernaum had built for Dorcas he flew. Lightly touching the parapet of the roof with his hand, he bounded over to the roof of the next house, crossed it swiftly, and disappeared in the darkness. On and on over the roofs he went.

Before he had crossed more than one or two, however, he heard footsteps pursuing him! There were soft voices. Did the Romans think to capture him there on the roofs where he and his neighborhood companions had played from childhood? Ha! He would lead them a chase! He knew that he could go far from home without descending to the street; therefore, without fear he darted onward.

Behind him came Sargon and Abrim, the rich Babylonian Jew and the ragged waif, companions in adventure. They did not suspect that Caleb thought they were pursuing Romans, or they would have called to reassure him. The keen ears of the street boy heard Caleb's sandaled feet on the tiles of the roofs and followed without trouble.

Abrim had no cumbersome garments to interfere with his movements; but Sargon found his rich, heavy mantle a nuisance; so,

without thinking of the value of it, he cast it aside, continuing clad only in a tight-fitting linen tunic.

Suddenly Sargon and Abrim heard a cry, after which there came no more sound of running feet. Surprised, they slackened their pace, listening intently. What had happened? "Listen!" In Greek, which was a universal language, the Babylonian cautioned his companion. They stopped. Near by, and below them was a moan. Silently they crept forward to peer downward. Below them was the court of a residence, in which could be seen the reflection of water in a fountain; however, there were no lights, such as had enabled them to avoid other courts. The moans came from below.

In his haste and fright, Caleb had mistaken the parapet of the court to be one separating two roofs and had vaulted. Fortunately his fall had been broken by a mass of shrubbery that grew in tubs at the fountain; but the shock had been sufficient to render him unconscious.

"He's down there!" pointed Sargon.

Abrim nodded, looking around for the stairs. He held up his hand. "Be silent! If we are heard in another man's house, ugh!

I don't want to lose my ears! Nor do I wish to try the *crux*. Be silent!"

Sargon scraped his feet on the stairs; but at the hissed command he became more careful. Foot by foot the two crept to Caleb's side. Sargon bathed his head while the other boy felt for broken bones. "Thank the gods," breathed Abrim, "he is whole, at least. Whisper to him to make no sound! See, he is moving."

Sargon cautioned his cousin to be silent; and he and Abrim helped Caleb to his feet. He still clung to the packet he had snatched from his room, and he made sure that his father's packet was safe in his girdle.

"Come! We must hasten out of here!" urged the water boy.

As Abrim heard a sound in a remote section of the house his heart bounded in fear. A moment later a light flashed, and voices could be heard! Before the three could flee, hampered as they were by the dazed Caleb, a young man and a boy entered the court and spied them. "Thieves!" exclaimed the boy, stopping suddenly.

That was more than the haughty Sargon could brook. "Thieves! You lie!" He gazed at the newcomers, seeing that they made no

movement toward assault. "Honest Jews are we, and here by accident."

The young man moved forward, closely followed by his companion. "See, Mark," he said to the boy. "One of them is injured. Do you seek your mother for bandages. Now," he turned toward Sargon, "tell me how it comes you are here in my friend's court at this hour?"

Sargon considered a moment. Under the circumstances they needed friends. Would it be best to tell the whole story? "Well, Sir," he began, helping Caleb down to a seat, "my cousin, here, is unfortunately the image of a slave in the household of a Roman who recently came to Jerusalem. Decimus is his name. He wishes to secure my cousin as a mate for his slave, to send back to Rome as a gift for a friend. Tonight he sent a band of hirelings for that purpose. My uncle dispatched Caleb, here, on an errand that would take him out of the city for a time; and in his flight he fell over the parapet. We were following, intending to go with him, and were about to help him out when you came. We must leave the city before morning, for if this Decimus has much influence, he will have

every gate watched as soon as he can spread the alarm."

Mark had returned with a pleasant-faced woman who was busily ministering to Caleb while Sargon talked. She paused to look at the young man. They both realized the seriousness of the predicament, and both pondered ways of helping their fellow countryman. "Lazarus," the woman spoke slowly, as though hesitating to say that which was in her mind, "might they—" She paused uncertainly. "Might they go through the gates with you? As your servants, perhaps?"

The young man clapped his hands together. "That is a fine idea, Mary! None will suspect them, then."

Sargon was interested. "But, Sir, do you go tonight, on the Sabbath?"

"Yes, though the Pharisees would have us do otherwise, I travel on this Sabbath, anyway. There is one waiting in my home that I wish to greet as soon as possible; therefore, we travel tonight! If you boys wish to aid my servants for a couple of hours, I believe you can pass the gates safely. I come from a long visit with relatives in Egypt, and have baggage for friends at home, plenty to load you three if you wish."

Caleb, who was now quite recovered, gave his opinion. "Let me go, Sargon. I'll take any chance, for you may believe I do not wish to make the acquaintance of my double!" He paused to imagine his fate in Rome if he were captured. The man for whom he was desired might not want him, in which case he might be sent to the slave market, there to stand with his ears bored, a *titulus*, or personal history hung around his neck, and his feet chalked to show that he was an imported slave waiting a bid that suited the dealer. He shuddered.

Evidently Sargon was thinking the same. "How can Jehovah allow such things?" he burst out passionately. "I can feel with Adab, sometimes, when he says there are no gods. If there are, why do they not strike these haughty Romans to the earth?"

"Hush, Boy!" Lazarus spoke sternly. "You are rash. Think you that Jehovah knows not what is happening? And think you that the wicked world deserves not some punishment? Say not such things! Our time comes! One is teaching us now the things we should do. He will lead us out of this maze of wickedness and misunderstanding." He

spoke as though inspired, causing the young men to gaze at him in surprise.

"Lazarus, say not too much," cautioned Mary. "I fear that you lean too much to the ideas of Judas. The Master has never said anything like that."

"Well, think you, Mary, that one is sent with power like his, without its being for some mighty purpose?"

"I grant you that, Lazarus, and since you have been on your journey, he has done greater works than you know!"

"So?" Lazarus seemed inclined to ask for details; then, bethinking him of the necessity for traveling, he continued, "But I'll hear more of that from his own lips in the morning. We must be on our way."

He looked at Caleb and Sargon. "If you are to travel as servants, what, think you, will the guards and the publican at the city gate think of the rings in your ears, and of those jeweled clasps?" He pointed to Sargon's delicate sandals on which dull red jewels shone. "Off with them! Mark, bid the men be ready at once at the door. Farewell, Mary. When you can, come with Mark to spend a few days with us."

"I shall, Lazarus. Give my love to your

sisters, and tell the Master that we think of him continually and try to follow his teachings. Bid him come to our roof if he travels to Jerusalem."

"Never fear, he will, Mary. Now, may the peace of Jehovah be with you!"

"And may his blessings go with you in all your ways, Lazarus. Come to us when you can and bring Mary and Martha. Farewell."

As the little band proceeded down the street, Caleb looked back to see the kindly woman standing in the door gazing after her friend. Her son stood beside her, holding aloft a lamp, whose yellow light threw a golden haze over their countenances.

There was but little traffic on the streets until the party drew near the gate. The young men noticed that their protector was heading for the gate leading to the Bethany road and wondered where he lived. It could not be far, for he expected to reach home early in the day.

Many torches flared in the gate, making the surroundings almost as light as midday. Here business never ceased. Traders arrived from their long journey southward from Damascus or from far eastern deserts, and their coming was waited eagerly at all hours



"Suppose you sell this to me!"

by the throngs who profited from them. Sellers of fruits and foods waited to serve the tired wayfarer. Scribes sat crouched in tiny booths, baskets of moist clay beside them ready for the writing tablets and trays of sand waiting for the computation of profit or loss. An ancient Jew who had evidently forgotten the teachings of his fathers waited impatiently for a new caravan from which he could buy cheaply some of the tired animals. What cared he that this was the Sabbath?

Prominent in the waiting throng was Abraham ben Izhar, the publican. Much money he had paid to the Romans for the privilege of taxing travelers at this gate, and it was far from his thoughts that anyone should by accident pass him by without paying, and paying well, for the goods they transported. None in the land were scorned by the Jews with such intensity as these of their own countrymen who thus served indirectly the conquering invaders from the West.

Insolently, Abraham stationed himself in the middle of the street when he saw Lazarus and his party approach. Accustomed he was to reviling from travelers, but from Lazarus he received, in surprise, the greeting, "May

the blessings of the Almighty rest upon you, Friend."

No wonder he stared, wondering what manner of man this was that he should speak thus to a publican. He mumbled a response, his eager hands ready to inspect the packages carried by the attendants. Under Abraham's eagle eye the assistants opened every parcel, bringing to light all manner of wares. Quite evidently Abraham was surprised.

"They are gifts," volunteered Lazarus. "from the land of the Pharaohs. I brought them for my family and friends."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Abraham skeptically. "'Tis a likely tale! Think you the tax will be less? Not so. If, indeed, these be for gifts, the tax will be that which applies to luxuries."

"Be it so," calmly replied Lazarus. "I have become accustomed to that since leaving Memphis. Your kind sees to it that nothing passes any gate or road without being taxed! Name the assessment. I am in haste."

Abraham gave little heed. He was reading a tablet which he had lifted from a bale of personal belongings carried by Lazarus himself. So far did the privileges of the publicans go! He sneered as he read. "So! You are one of the followers of that mad Naz-

arene, eh? You will do well to heed a word from me, Sir Traveler! This master your 'Mary' speaks of will come to no good end. He—"

"Cease your talk, Fellow!" spoke Lazarus sternly. "'Tis your business to tax my goods, not to direct my affairs! Make haste."

Muttering, Abraham estimated, naming a rate that caused Caleb to gasp. He wondered if he should mention the package he carried for his father. "That covers all except this," explained Abraham, holding aloft in the light an exquisite alabaster jar, cunningly chased with bands of gold.

"Suppose you sell this to me! Or give it in payment of all the other tax! Come, what say you?"

"You presume, Publican! Name the assessment! That fragile toy is for my sister, not for such hands as yours!"

"A dainty thing!" admired Abraham, fondly handling the jar and sniffing at its perfume. "Well, if you must take it with you, add to the score two staters."

"Well it is seen why your kind are called robbers!" scornfully commented Lazarus. "And the Romans wonder why we writhe be-

neath their yoke and seek one to lead us to freedom!"

Abraham, bent over his pouch to stow away his gold, peered upward without lifting his head. "Aha! I thought so!" He nodded in satisfaction. "I thought so, and this Nazarene we mentioned, is he to do the leading? Ha, ha! Has any good thing ever come out of Nazareth? When your time comes, and his, do not say that Abraham did not warn you!"

Lazarus motioned to his attendants to lift their packages, and without the customary farewell, led the way through the gate into the quiet night of the Kidron valley.

Caleb felt Sargon squeeze his arm in elation. They were free! Free, with what adventures before them?

CHAPTER SIX.

The Journey to Bethany

A H, Caleb!" whispered Sargon as soon as the little group had passed the city gates, "we are free! Now, let them try to catch us!"

Caleb merely smiled. He was whispering a prayer of thanksgiving to Jehovah for having enabled him to leave the city without hindrance. Finishing his pious duty, he said softly enough that the servants could not hear, "Yes, Cousin, we are free! But as for their catching us, why do you say us? No danger threatens you. I am free of the city walls now, Sargon; do you and this other boy return to my father's house."

"Ha! Say you so, Caleb? Why, for what reason do you think I came after you?"

"I know not, Sargon. It was not wise to run the risk of winning the Roman's displeasure."

"Pah! What care I for his displeasure? Let him send his minions after me to Babylon when I go home, and he will find himself in such a turmoil that he'll wish he'd never left

Rome! You Jerusalem people are frightened of these Romans, and—”

Caleb interrupted. “Frightened? Yes, and well we may be, Sargon. You have not been in the city long enough to see how they treat us! They help themselves to all we have, and we dare not say nay to them. If they wish to occupy one of our homes, out we go, whether we will or not, to make way for them. If they desire one of our sisters, she disappears some day or night, nor is more heard of her.”

Sargon had grown pale at the last words, and he uttered an exclamation that interrupted Caleb. “Your sisters?” he inquired hoarsely.

“Why, yes! They stop at nothing.”

Sargon clenched his hands tightly, and his lips drew to a thin line. “Caleb,” he snapped, “would they dare touch your sister, Dorcas?”

Caleb stared in surprise. Why should Sargon be so disturbed about Dorcas?

Seeing that he was betraying feelings which he preferred to keep secret, Sargon flushed. Trying to laugh the matter off, he said, “Oh, I just couldn’t think they’d touch a girl of her class.”

“Well, they would take either Dorcas or me, whichever they wanted, if they wished.”

Abrim had listened without speaking; but now he broke in, feeling that some explanation of his presence was called for. He told of all he had heard Ali and Hosain say, and of his suspicions. "I thought mayhap they meant you," he explained, gazing through the night at Caleb, "and I did not wish evil to befall you. I went, therefore, to your father's house, as you know; but when the Romans entered, I followed with your cousin. Nor shall I return! None have I to miss me, and it may be that I can be of use to you along the road."

"Truly you may, Boy," exclaimed Sargon. "Know I not?" He shifted his burden to his other shoulder and told of battles with robbers as he traveled from Babylon with his father's friend Adab.

"If any of these hill robbers suspected that we carried a single piece of gold, they would swoop down upon us like hawks! No, Cousin, we'll not go back! I know not where my uncle instructed you to go, but I suspect that the package he gave you contains something of worth; and where there are valuables, there is adventure! Where you go, I, at least, go also!"

"And I!" echoed Abrim.

Caleb clasped the street boy's arm. "It is good you came to warn me, a stranger. I shall remember it."

"Ah, it was nothing!" Abrim was embarrassed.

"I shall remember, though," assured Caleb. He walked in silence for a couple of minutes before continuing. "If we are to be companions, it is right that you should know where and why I go. Let us drop back a short distance so that these strangers may not hear."

Their temporary protector, Lazarus, was hastening on ahead of his servants, evidently having forgotten for the time the three strangers who were helping to carry his baggage. His thoughts were filled with eager anticipation, picturing the joyful welcome he would receive when he reached home after his long absence.

The travelers were proceeding along beneath the wall of the city, having the highways to themselves. Pious Jews were in their homes, observing the Sabbath, except, of course, such as were traveling for urgent reasons, as Lazarus and his companions were; and Roman traders had sought the inns for the night.

The broad highway, a blessing that the Romans took with them into every conquered province, stretched ahead in the moonlight, disappearing at a distance in the shadows of the Kidron valley. On the eastern side of the valley loomed the orchards and vineyards on the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

On their right hand towered the wall of the city. The travelers knew that almost directly over their heads were the magnificent buildings of the temple, in late years restored and embellished by Herod. Looking up at the massive masonry, Abrim, filled with memories, said, "If we had had time, we could have escaped through the caverns beneath the temple. I know a way through that even the priests do not suspect."

The party swung sharply to the left, descended into the valley, and crossed the brook, which leaped and murmured beneath the bridge.

As they entered the shadows cast by the groves, Caleb took Abrim and Sargon into his confidence. "You both know that I flee from being seized and sent to Rome as a slave because I happen to be a mate for a slave in the household of the Roman, Decimus; but you cannot know where I go. That is a plan of

my father and Adab. Here," he tapped his girdle, "I carry jewels which my father believes will be desired by a rich man of Capernaum, one Salomon ben Gershon. It gives me an errand to the North, far from this Decimus, and enables my father to dispose of the jewels."

For a moment he was silent. Perhaps he feared that his companions would be amused at that which he next had to say. "Besides that, I have an errand of my own in Capernaum. Tell me, have either of you heard of a man up there who performs wonderful deeds? He heals the sick, and preaches wonderful sermons about a coming Kingdom of God?"

Sargon made a sound that gave a negative answer.

"I have," replied Abrim. "I've seen him."

"What?" Caleb stopped suddenly. "What? You've seen him? Where?"

"In the temple. Many people in Jerusalem know him. He came to the city to worship one Sabbath, and a woman who lives down back of the wine shop kept by Gaius, the slave, told me about him. Again, while I was about my business, I saw him. He was then

on his way out of the city. I think he likes it not within the walls."

"Tell me," demanded Caleb, eagerly, "looked he like a mighty man? It is said perhaps he is the Messiah."

Abrim laughed. "A mighty man? No, he is gentle, kind, and quiet."

"Oh!" Caleb's voice indicated disappointment.

"Why do you ask about that man, Caleb?" inquired Sargon.

"Because one of his friends told me such wonderful things about him. He must be a marvellous man! He does the most kindly things for people, and talks so strangely about the Kingdom which is to come. Just suppose, Sargon," he continued, his voice filled with awe, "just suppose Jehovah has sent us a deliverer at last! And that this man may be the one! Wouldn't that be wonderful?"

Sargon scented battle, which appealed to him more than thought of kindly deeds. "A deliverer? From these Romans? Ha! I'll fight with him!"

At a sudden thought, Caleb spoke quickly. "Do nothing rash, Sargon! Enter not into brawls, lest you be thrust into prison. Per-

haps it is fear of such things that caused father to warn me that no good would come from this man."

"Then why do you wish to see him?" inquired Sargon.

"Because of the wonderful things he teaches. Good teaching can do no harm, and if he is like Korah, the carpenter, says, I wish to listen to him. He taught Korah how to pray much better than the rabbis, and Korah taught Dorcas and me, and now Dorcas is nearly well!"

Their conversation was interrupted by Lazarus, who had remembered them and was waiting for them. "I am ashamed, Boys, that I permitted you to carry the burdens so far," he apologized. "My thoughts were so full of my sisters and the joy of home-coming, that I forgot my duty. Let the servants now take the bundles."

Relieved of the baggage, the three comrades sauntered along, making plans for the future. Lazarus heard them and insisted that they spend the remainder of the Sabbath, at least, in his home. "We shall soon see the village," he announced gladly. "Just around the shoulder of the hill; then down the path through the date grove, and we are home!"

As they passed the shoulder of the hill, the first rays of dawn gleamed far away across the hills and valleys, throwing a rosy glow up into the starlit sky. In the faint light a small village could be seen snuggled among the trees toward the base of the hill, Bethany, noted for its hospitality to strangers.

Lazarus hastened forward, motioning to his companions to remain with him. They saw his lips move and knew that he was giving thanks for his safe return. Through the gloom of the tall trees they went, past two or three homes set back from the road in the bowers of trees, and up a path leading to a spacious dwelling covered with climbing plants. Sounds could be heard indoors, indicating that the household was awake. "Mary! Martha!" Lazarus raised his voice in a happy shout.

There was a cry of joy, and a moment later a slender young woman ran through the door and threw herself into the young man's arms. "Oh, Brother! Praise be to Jehovah that you have come again!"

"Mary!" That was all, but the word carried a world of affection.

The dawn was now bright enough for Caleb and his companions to see that the young

woman was a few years, perhaps, older than their new friend; and that another young woman who came more sedately from the house, was a little older than the first.

“Martha! Peace be with you!” Lazarus extended one arm, holding Mary with the other.

Martha, flushed with joy and thanksgiving, submitted to his affectionate embrace for a moment or two; then, drawing away, she said, “Mary, come! We must prepare refreshment for Lazarus and his friends.”

“Oh, Martha,” laughingly chided her brother, “can the servants not attend to that? All the refreshment I need now is to feast my eyes upon you, my Sisters!”

Martha smiled. “Right bountiful fare that will be, no doubt, Brother; but if you need nothing more substantial, we have guests who have not yet broken their fast.”

“Ah, yes! The trader with whom you sent your last letter met me at the khan at Gaza, and when I learned that Jesus was to be with you for this Sabbath, I hastened onward to be with you, also. Is he here?”

“Yes, he went to the olive orchard some time ago, to pray in quiet. He will be happy to have you here, for he leaves tonight.”

"So soon?" exclaimed Lazarus in disappointment.

"Yes, he has much to do at Capernaum and cannot stay." Martha turned toward the door. She looked curiously at the strangers.

"Come, Brother. Bring your friends indoors that they may rest."

"These, Martha, are young men who traveled with me from Jerusalem. I met them in the home of our friend Mary. I'll let them introduce themselves, if they will." He smiled at his companions.

Sargon bowed low in greeting before the blushing Mary, giving no heed to the more sober Martha. "I," he said, "am Sargon ben Josiah. My father is a dealer in fine wares in the bazars of Babylon. This," he motioned to Caleb, "is Caleb ben Nahbi, from Jerusalem."

"And you?" Lazarus looked rather doubtfully at Abrim, who quite evidently came from surroundings entirely different from those the others knew.

"Abrim is my name. Whose son I am, I know not." It had never occurred to Abrim before to care whose son he was. He had lived a life of freedom, even though it was one of hardship at times; but now, hearing

these two new friends announce the names of their fathers, he wished he had a family.

There was wistfulness in his tones which was heard and understood by a young man who had approached behind him. The man ran his fingers through the boy's massed curls and said, as Abrim turned and looked up at him, "Why, to be sure you know whose son you are! Is not your father Jehovah?"

Surprised, Abrim drew back, nudging Caleb vigorously with his elbow. He turned his head to whisper, "Ps-s-t! That's him, the man you said you wanted to see."

At the same moment, Lazarus stepped quickly forward to throw his arms around the newcomer in delighted greeting. "Jesus! How glad I am to see you!"

"Lazarus, dear Friend!" He held the youth off and gazed into his candid eyes. "May our Father have you in His care! Did you have a pleasant journey?"

Listening to a brief account of the journey he accompanied Lazarus and his sisters through the entrance, leaving the others staring at one another outside.

"So," Caleb was thinking to himself, "that is the teacher!"

CHAPTER SEVEN.

The Miracle

C ALEB was rather crestfallen as he gazed at Abrim, who had just announced that the inconspicuous young man entering the house was Jesus, the teacher from Capernaum. He could hardly believe it; although there was a calmness about the carpenter that seemed born of power; yet he was unassuming. Caleb had expected a soldier, a conqueror, just as had all the Jews: however, there was something, he did not exactly know what, which fascinated him. "Abrim, are you sure?" he asked.

Abrim laughed shortly. "Well, I've lived among people all the time, and it's my business to know one from another. Yes," emphatically, "he is the man you are looking for."

Martha appeared at the door with a smiling invitation to the guests to enter and break their fast. "You must be both weary and hungry."

"I am weary," confessed Caleb.

"And I am hungry," added Abrim.

“I am both!” Sargon’s voice left no room for doubt on that point.

The three followed their hostess, Caleb, as a matter of course, reverently touched the little case containing the Mezuzah* and kissed his finger, murmuring a benediction.

Sargon, not having had the same religious rearing as his cousin, would have neglected this pious observance; but seeing Caleb touch the holy object, he did likewise. Abrim, raised on the streets and in hovels, knew not the meaning of the action, though he imitated his companions lest he be lacking in some expected social observance.

In the court of the house a table had been prepared for a number of persons. Lazarus had already escorted his beloved guest to a place of honor at the head of a triclinium which Lazarus used in his home instead of the common low table. This arrangement consisted of three tables set in a square “U,” with comfortable couches on the outer sides, upon which the diners might recline while eating, resting themselves upon the left elbow. The servants could enter the opening between

*The parchment enclosed in a little case attached to the door frame, containing a selection from the Scriptures.

the tables, to assist their master and his guests.

As the young men entered, a servant poured water over their hands from a beautiful jug, holding a wide vessel to catch the water as it fell.

Another, answering a motion from Lazarus, escorted the guests to their places. One who was inclined to observe strictly the teachings of the Pharisees would have glanced askance at Abrim and perhaps would have refused to eat with him until assured of his freedom from ceremonial defilement; but this household had been so much influenced by the teaching of the guest of honor, that its members were broader minded than most Jews.

When all were ready to take their places, Lazarus rose and recited in unison with the others, the Psalm of the great king of their nation, thus giving thanks to Jehovah for the food before them. Abrim listened in astonishment as the devout voices arose:

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness

for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Caleb, repeating the familiar words with the others, glanced stealthily at Jesus' face. He noticed how it lighted up as the man repeated the words of thanksgiving and praise. It seemed entirely different from before, it fairly glowed with an inward radiance. How ardently he repeated the words, seeming to lay especial emphasis upon those beginning with "Yea, though I walk . . ." as though they had some special significance for him. Caleb could scarcely remove his eyes from this radiant being.

A moment later all prepared to eat of the bountiful, though simple, food that had been prepared. It was the usual early morning meal of milk, cheese, bread, and fruit. The

Sabbath supper would be much more elaborate.

Rising from the table at last, the young guests looked around in some uncertainty. Rest would be welcome, and Caleb was wondering if they could not slip away some place for a nap. Evidently the housewifely Martha understood his desire, for she sent a servant to bathe the young men's feet and lead them to couches for sleep.

Jesus and Lazarus, accompanied by other men who had been at the table with them, went to the orchard to wander beneath the trees while discussing matters that lay near their hearts. Jesus after a time sat on a stone, leaving the others to go their way. When Caleb came from his rest, he saw him there with a child on his lap.

The child, not yet old enough to talk plainly, was chattering while its fingers reached for the beard above it. While Caleb watched, the carpenter lowered his cheek until it rested on the bright head, and he gathered the little one closely to him.

Looking up, the man saw Caleb watching him and smiled an invitation to draw near. He raised the child in both hands, holding it on high and saying, "The little ones, are they

not a blessing? So innocent are they! Sent straight from our Father in heaven."

Caleb smiled but said nothing. That was a queer remark for a man to make! The carpenter continued, "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven! Children, and those who have become like them."

"I do not understand," said Caleb in perplexity. "How can one become like them?"

"Oh," replied the man, "not in stature, but in purity and loving-kindness. If men were like children, loving one another, then would we not have heaven right here on this beautiful earth?"

Caleb looked around as Jesus waved his hand to draw attention to the budding trees, the flowers peeping through the grass, the tinkling waterfall where some child had dammed the brook. His eyes rested upon a miserably clothed woman who had approached through the trees carrying a babe in her arms. Hesitantly she drew nearer. "Seek you Mary, or Martha?" gently inquired the carpenter.

"No," replied the stranger. "I was told that their friend from Capernaum, he who raised a girl from the dead, is here. Tell me," she

raised her anxious eyes to the man's face, "tell me, is he here?"

"Why do you seek him so anxiously, my Sister?"

"Why?" There were tears in her voice as she replied, "Why? Look you!" She cast aside the cloth that covered the babe, causing Caleb to draw back in distress at sight of the emaciated, stunted limbs and wizened little face. "Look you! Since birth he has been thus, and the physicians have done nothing for him. Nor will they serve me more, for they have all my money."

Jesus, his face filled with compassion, set the little child in his arms upon the ground and gently lifted the babe. Reluctantly the mother permitted the stranger to hold the beloved child, watching him cuddle the little one in the hollow of his arm.

Caleb, entranced, watched. Never had he imagined a man could be so gentle, so filled with love.

The carpenter again seated himself on the stone, leaning against an ancient tree behind him. The thin foliage above caused the sunlight to flicker on his face forming almost a halo around his head. Softly, with infinite

pity, his hands stroked the tiny limbs. His lips moved in prayer.

Impatient to find the man she sought, the woman watched.

The babe stirred uneasily. Feebly his little hands tried to raise. Again they moved, raised uncertainly to the beard, clasped it.

The mother gasped. Never had the child done the like before!

Over the curls the carpenter's fingers roamed, softly parting them.

Caleb, breathless, moved closer. The child's limbs were surely filling out! The babe's shriveled little lips were curling in a smile!

"Ah, my Father!" breathed the woman.

"Yes, call upon thy Father," said the Christ, smiling at her. "Has he not promised us all good things? If we ask him, think you he will not hear? Let us try." He rose to his feet, holding the child extended on both hands. His face was raised reverently toward the sky, and from his lips came such a prayer as neither the woman nor Caleb had ever heard. He called upon their Almighty Father to bless the little one thus brought to his throne for mercy, and to fill him with energy and health.

As the mother listened, tears streamed

down her face. When the man ceased, her ardent "Amen" joined his. She reached for the babe; then started back in amazement. There was no longer need to seek the wonder-working guest. "Oh, great Jehovah! My child! My child!" She snatched him from the man, turning him over and over in her hands for a minute, staring in wonder. So filled with amazement was she that she paused not to realize who had brought her good fortune to her, but running wildly, she cried, "Martha! Martha! Look! My child is healed! See! Oh, Martha, Martha!"

Martha hurried toward her. "How came this to be? Have you been to Jesus?"

"Nay, I sought him, but a man in the orchard prayed, and now see my child!"

Martha smiled. "A man prayed?" she repeated. "Think you that any other than Jesus could pray like that? Or bring such a thing to pass?"

Caleb, as astonished as the mother, waited to hear no more of the conversation. He must find Sargon and Abrim to tell them the wonderful news.

Sargon listened skeptically. "I'll believe that when I see the like myself, Caleb. You've

made up your mind that this man is the Son of God, and you'll believe anything!"

"All right," came the reply. "Just wait until you see for yourself. How a carpenter comes to have such power I do not know; but this I know, Sargon ben Josiah," he added solemnly, "you should have heard what he said to me about being like a child! Why—"

"Well, you're like a child," came the teasing reply; "you believe anything!"

"No, I don't! But if you had seen it, and heard all he said to me, you'd—you'd feel different. I do." With that Caleb turned to go away by himself, for he was filled with wonder.

This man's words about the world being a heaven when all men were innocent, and free from guile, made him uncomfortable. Here he was, carrying jewels upon which he had paid no gate tax. To be sure, the Romans were unjust to assess articles of value so highly, and take so much money from the rightful possessors; still, that was the law. If Caleb was to be as good as he believed Jesus would wish him to be, he would have to obey the law, whether he liked it or not.

Impatiently he pondered the matter, kicking at the pebbles in the path. If he went

back to pay the tax, he might be detained and turned over to Decimus. Torn between conflicting desires, Caleb experienced the battle that was to come later to innumerable followers of the man he had met in the orchard. Being free, and unsuspected of having violated the law, should he continue on his way, saying nothing; or knowing that which was right, should he send money to the unsuspecting publican?

CHAPTER EIGHT.

The Wondrous Story

THE Sabbath passed quietly in the household of Nahbi ben Naphtali; though none would have been surprised had the Romans returned to demand Caleb. Dorcas and her mother kept rather closely to their own quarters or in the booth on the roof, trying not to think about their absent brother and son.

Nahbi did not deviate from his usual Sabbath procedure of worship; but during his absence, he was worried lest his home be searched again by the enemy. He visited families near home where he knew his money would afford relief and gave such assistance as he could to those in need; after which he brooded beside his fountain, wondering about Caleb.

Adab, the experienced traveler and warrior, tried to cheer his host. "Fear not, friend Nahbi," he pressed a friendly hand upon the jeweler's shoulder. "The boy is doing well. If you wish my opinion, I should say it is good that this happened, else you would have

kept the boy tied to your girdle until he became soft and fearful. Come, come," he urged, drawing Nahbi to his feet, "fear not for the boy! Sargon is with him, and think not that any Roman could talk him down, or cause him to draw back a foot!"

The men walked toward the stairs leading to the roof. "Let us go up to enjoy the coolness of the evening," continued Adab, leading the way. "I like it not in these stuffy houses. Give me the desert, or the open market place."

Dorcas looked up with interest when she heard the visitor approaching and made room beside her for him to sit. The marble bench upon which she rested was broad and comfortable, bowered over by blooming plants set in huge tubs of soil. Beside it stood a harp, upon which she had been picking out a tune, for Nahbi was not so influenced by his pharisaical associates that he made his family unhappy by restrictions. He piously observed the teachings of the Scriptures, but when it came to man-made rules, he decided for himself.

Around Dorcas were brilliant cushions, many of them embroidered by her own slender fingers—deep crimson, flaming yellows, blues, and pinks—all blending into an ori-

ental mass of beauty. At her feet the marble tiles of the roof were covered by a glowing rug which had no doubt been woven far, far away in an oasis by a daughter of some desert sheik. Very beautiful and appropriate for her, no doubt, but Adab brushed it aside with masculine contempt.

Dorcas smiled in amusement at his action. "Adab," she coaxed, "tell me about Babylon, the desert, or any of the wonderful places you have visited. Won't you? Nothing wonderful ever happens here."

The Assyrian gazed at her for a few moments, stroking his curled beard, of which he was immensely proud. He seemed to be pondering the girl's request.

Rachel, placing a cushion on the floor, sat beside her daughter, while Nahbi paced back and forth, gazing out across the roofs as though trying to catch a glimpse of his son. Rebecca, ever thoughtful of her young charge, brought a filmy mantle to put it around the girl's shoulders before stationing herself at her shoulder. The little group waited patiently for Adab to respond to Dorcas' request.

While they waited, his eyes brightened, his hand stroked his beard, his lips parted. He seemed to be seeing something far away.

Suddenly he gave a short laugh. "Ha, ha! Nothing wonderful ever happens here, eh?"

Dorcas sat forward. This sounded interesting. If it was to be a story, she wished Caleb might hear it, for he did enjoy the tales of travelers. "Tell us, Adab," Dorcas coaxed softly. "What are you thinking of?"

He shook himself, sighing. "Something wonderful," he replied. "Something wonderful that happened right near Jerusalem when I was a boy." He fell into thought again so that Dorcas gently roused him by moving closer to him.

"Come, Adab, do tell us!"

"How old is your brother, Child?" His abrupt question surprised them.

"Why, he is—he is almost nineteen years old. Why do you ask?" Nahbi paused in his walk to wait the answer.

"Uh-hum," mused Adab. "I was just about his age, just about, and Balthazar was about—er—seventy." He pondered again for a moment. "I wonder what ever became of him, and the little one!" He settled himself comfortably, and Dorcas realized with delight that the desired story was to be forthcoming.

"You must know, to understand what I tell, that my father was Hassan, a sheik with



"Something wonderful happened right near Jerusalem."

wealth enough for a king, and I was the only son my mother bore to him. To my father, ben Naphtali, I was as your son is to you, the idol of his life. Nothing was denied me.

“From our desert home we sometimes went to the market at Babylon; my father to traffic with traders from distant lands, and I to roam around seeing the sights. Sights? Ah, such sights were not to be found elsewhere in all the wide world, as I have since learned! There came strange looking fishers from the south seas, bringing hoards of pearls for the wealthy men of the city. From the jungles which our travelers could reach only after weeks of toil, came odd-looking men with monkeys, brilliant birds, and strange beasts tightly bound.

“From other lands came slant-eyed, yellow little men with braided hair coiled beneath embroidered caps, who brought exquisite cloth, and goblets of creamy-green color, and delicate carvings. These and many precious things they brought, after which they would disappear for long periods of time. Their land was inaccessible to our traders, and we knew not how long it took these mysterious ones to return to their homes.

“From the North came such creatures!

Wild and woolly, with shaggy beards that covered their faces to the eyes and hung matted to their waists. Clothed in skins, they were, which made them look like beasts, and their actions were little different from those of beasts. Sometimes they came on rough little horses, sometimes on swift camels, and the tales they told of their homeland were such that none from Babylon was tempted to follow them. Ugh! Snow and ice everywhere, and darkness for weeks at a time, but there in the land of snow and ice were animals with furs which these men exchanged for much gold, soft, rich furs that brought warmth to the bodies of the aged. From the West—but enough of them!

“My young ears drank in the tales these various men told, and my eyes missed no detail of their strange wares. It all was wonderful, entrancing, far different from anything to be seen in the vast expanses of my desert home.

“After a few visits to the wonderful city, I resolved that no desert wanderer would I be. I’d be a trader and go to all these strange lands, there to see for myself this world. My father mourned when he learned of my decision, but he did not say me Nay. Instead,

he inquired for a trustworthy man with whom he might send me until I should be ready to travel alone.

“One day, while loitering in the gate of the city, father saw a camel which struck his fancy, and carelessly he drew too close to it without first having learned its disposition. With a squeal of anger the brute nipped his arm so viciously that the flesh was torn badly. In a few hours a terrible inflammation set in.

“The doctors could give father no relief, and this I told to a group of strangers as I mingled with them at the market place. One of them, a pleasant-faced man from Alexandria, said he had a cure which he would be glad to use if father would permit it. Joyfully I guided him to our tent outside the walls where he applied his ointment to the wound.

“Well, to be brief, a friendship grew between father and the stranger, whose name was Selim, so great that father asked if Selim would take me with him for a trip to the land of pyramids. I was wild with joy at the prospect and could hardly contain myself until Selim should be ready to set forth.

“Day after day we traveled at last, crossing the fertile lands toward Damascus. All this was like a dream to me, the fields of waving

grain, the luxuriant gardens, the flowing streams, and the canals.

“Leaving Damascus, we went by the desert route toward the south, bound for your own city, which Selim called Jerusalem. Now I was in familiar country!

“Well I remember a starry night when I gazed upward in the darkness, while silence reigned all around like it does nowhere else in all the earth. Softly to my ears came the pleasant murmur made by the resting animals.

“From the tents came the voices of women who sang and plucked at musical instruments, but sweeter to my ears than this, Dorcas, came another sound, one that city ears could not have heard, the soft whisper of the desert, murmuring to the stars the age-long secrets of the sands.

“As I dreamed, open-eyed, there came to my side a wise-man. Some days before, unaccompanied, he had joined the caravan far out in the desert, much to the amazement of Selim; for who ever heard of one so old traveling alone, as he was, in the trackless wastes?

“I sat up when he came to me, and our conversation gave me an opportunity to mention

this. He laughed quietly before replying to the inquiry in my voice. 'Trackless wastes? Boy, you think not. Have I not the same guide that you follow? Eh?'

" 'The stars!' he exclaimed. 'The messengers of God; but who can read and understand their message?'

"After a short silence, during which we watched the stars winking in the night, he continued. 'One of them brings me a message which I cannot read, but I follow its guidance night after night, praying to the Everlasting One that he will make it plain to me. Some stupendous thing is about to come to the world, else Balthazar has lost his skill in deciphering the puzzle of the skies; but what it is, what it is, even I know not.'

"I spoke not, fearing to stop his murmured comments. They interested me. 'Yes, yes,' continued Balthazar, getting to his feet with difficulty, and pacing the sand, 'my star truly brings a wonderful message; and in good time He who has always been will make it plain. There is naught for me to do but follow where the star leads.'

"As the days passed, our route separated from that which the wise-man wished to follow. Through the thinly populated lands east

of the Jordan we proceeded; then to find ourselves traveling the highways with myriads of men and women.

“In response to our inquiries, we learned that Cæsar had ordered all Jews to go at this time to the city of their fathers, there to be enrolled in order that the Romans might know the number of them. Thousands there were of them, thousands upon thousands, so that we wondered whence they came and where they would find shelter. Traveling faster than these, we passed through the throng, being surprised to find the crowd of travelers denser the nearer we came to the city.

“Seeing that the inns at the city walls would be crowded, Selim decided to stop at some village where his people and animals might have better accommodations. We were fortunate enough to find the last available quarters in the village where he elected to stop toward evening.

“Cold it was, truly, so that I was thankful to accept shelter with one of the camel boys in a cavern behind the inn, everything else being taken. There we arranged things as comfortable as possible before going to the

courtyard to join the host of strangers who hovered over the fires there.

“Into this motley group came an elderly man, leading an ass; and upon it rode a girl with the sweetest face, Dorcas, that ever man did see! Fair as a lily was she, though her face at that moment was drawn with suffering, as even my inexperienced eyes could see. Gently the man lifted her to a seat by the coals; then he turned to seek the landlord.

“In a few moments the two men drew near, to be joined almost at once by the landlord’s wife, who engaged noisily in their conversation. I could see that the man was refusing something, for he shook his head vigorously, while the woman insisted excitedly.

“‘No, Wife!’ the landlord at last declared loudly. ‘I tell you, no! He,’ nodding toward the newcomer, ‘has no gold. Why should I ask a wealthy man to make way for his wife, that she may have shelter? No! We run this place for profit, not for praise.’

“‘But I tell you, Husband,’ cried the wife, going to the young woman, ‘you cannot turn her out into the roads on a night like this! See, already she suffers and is faint!’

“It was true. My heart was touched. I re-

membered the comfortable place we boys had fixed in the cavern. It was nothing much, but at least it was warm and dry. I motioned to the angry woman and whispered that she could send the travelers to occupy our quarters if she wished.

“Thus it came about that again I spent a night under the familiar stars. Seeing a gleam of light on a near-by hill, and thinking that shepherds had built it, I sought companionship with them, listening to their songs and tales of the great men of their nation.

“The hours passed without event until of a sudden I noticed Balthazar’s star begin to brighten. Clearer and clearer it shone, dimming all the others; and as it increased in gloriousness, there came a sound of singing, and music. Such sounds never had been heard on this earth! Trumpets sounded faintly—far, far away. They drew nearer so that at last the blast of them seemed immediately overhead, there to die away. From above came a voice which so frightened me that I cast myself face downward on the ground, covering my head with my garment, thinking that the last day had come, indeed. Muffled the sound of voices came to me, but I gave no heed to anything until I heard the sound of

rapidly retreating footsteps, upon which I looked up to discover my companions hastening toward the inn. I followed.

“Dorcas, what think you we found? A babe! In the manger which I had prepared for my own resting place! A babe from whom came a soft cry that moved my heart. The mother was the young woman who had been ill. How glad I was that I had given up my shelter to her!

“The shepherds fell to their knees and worshiped, telling others who had followed, that this was a child born to be king, saying that the angels had told them to seek him here. There was talk about his being the Promised One of Israel, the Lamb of God, the Messiah; I know not what.

“I have always remembered the smile of thankfulness which the mother gave me when I turned to leave. I did not see her again for several weeks, when, in Egypt, Selim stopped in a village for water. There we found the parents and the babe. It was said that they had fled there for safety from Herod; but I do not know the particulars. Often I have wondered about them.”

Adab came to a pause, staring thoughtfully

at the stars. Was he seeking Balthazar's wonderful, guiding star?

Nahbi stared at his guest in amazement at this astounding story. The moon showed his wife, her hand pressed to her heart as though overcome by emotion. Dorcas clung to the trader's arm, breathlessly hoping for a continuance.

Seeing that he would tell no more, Dorcas rose. "Adab," she whispered, "who was he, the babe?"

The Assyrian laughed shortly. "All I know is what I was told. Judging from the wonders around his birth, and the prophecies that preceded him for many centuries, I'd say he might have been what some claimed, the Son of God."

"The Son of God!" Rachel whispered it in awe. "Husband, you hear?"

"Yes, but if it was the Son of God, what became of him?"

"That I know not, Friend," replied Adab. "After a time the parents left Egypt, no doubt to return to their home some place in the North. I went to my father's tents. I know no more. Though, now that I recall the matter, I'd like to know."

"Father," said Dorcas, half afraid to speak,

“you know the man Korah, the carpenter, told us about who some say is the Messiah. Might it be—”

“Oh, no! He’s some impostor, just as I said.” Nahbi turned to his guest. “How long since was all this, Adab?”

The trader considered for a moment. “Oh, a matter of about thirty years.”

“Thirty years!” Nahbi’s voice was tinged with scorn. “If there had been anything to it, we’d have been freed from our oppressors before this time! No, no! Doubtless your stargazers were deceived!”

Thus briefly Nahbi dismissed the most wonderful story he had ever heard. Without further comment he slowly paced to the opposite side of the roof, there to gaze silently into the eastern sky.

Adab stood beside Dorcas, idly toying with a cord of the cushions. The girl moved quietly closer to his side and gently pulled him down on the seat. “Adab,” she coaxed, “tell me some more stories—about nowadays.”

In the darkness he looked down at the white face. “About what, Child? Desert robbers? Shipwrecks? Thirst in the deserts? What shall it be?”

“Oh, none of those, Adab. Tell me,” she

pulled his head down to whisper, "tell me about what Sargon did in Babylon before he came here."

"Ah-ha, my little Lady! You're in lo—"

With a squeal Dorcas put her hand over his bearded lips. "S-h-h! They'll hear!" She nodded toward her mother and Rebecca, who had engaged in a low-toned discussion of the tale they had just heard. "They'll hear!"

"It's true, then?" whispered the Assyrian, teasingly.

"There's only one person who has a right to ask that," smiled Dorcas. "Come, now, tell me some stories."

Far into the night Adab did as she requested.

CHAPTER NINE.

The Price of Honesty

EARLY on the morning of the day following the Sabbath, the singing of birds and the happy sounds of a busy household wakened Caleb and his companions. For a moment he did not remember where he was; then, recalling that Jesus, his new acquaintance, intended to make an early start for the North, he jumped from his couch. "Sargon!" he exclaimed. "Hasten. I wish to go with Jesus. It will be much better than going alone."

"Well," commented his cousin, stretching himself wearily. "From all I've seen, he wouldn't be much protection in case of attack."

"That isn't it, Sargon," explained Caleb. "I want to ask him questions. You know what is whispered of him? That he is the Messiah?"

"Yes, and I also know that your father warned you that trouble might come to his friends, too," remarked Sargon; "but you

will have to decide whom you travel with. I'll go along."

"And I," echoed Abrim.

Caleb turned a troubled glance upon the water carrier. All night his sleep had been troubled. Would this wonder-working teacher approve of his having carried jewels from the city when he knew that a tax was expected by the authorities?

No, this man was too just to countenance anything that smacked even remotely of dishonesty. That was certain. Mentally convinced of this, Caleb spoke. "No, Abrim, you must return to Jerusalem for me."

"What?" There was disappointment and dismay in the boy's voice.

"Yes, I wish you to take this money to the publican who assessed the baggage we carried for Lazarus. Tell him it is for jewels that I carried without his knowledge."

Caleb thought for a moment. "Then go to my father, tell him that I am safe, and I shall expect a message from him when I reach Salomon ben Gershon."

Reluctantly Abrim departed, leaving his new friends to journey over the long miles of wilderness along the Jordan without him.

Unfortunately the Roman, Decimus, was

with the publican when Abrim arrived, talking earnestly over something that brought a grin of delight to the taxgatherer's face. "Understand, friend Abraham?" asked the young man, gazing at the Jew, who nodded in satisfaction.

"Ay, I understand! A rich plum it will be, eh?" He rubbed his hands thoughtfully, "But we must lay our plans well, Decimus! There must be no slip!"

With that he turned to the waiting, half-frightened Abrim. "What will you, Boy?"

Abrim searched in the corner of his sleeve and produced the silver which Caleb had given to him, explaining his errand.

"Ha! Smuggled them past the gate, eh? 'Tis well he remembered and sent the money!" Abraham fondled the coins. "Whose jewels were they?" he inquired. "I must give credit where credit is due. Eh, Decimus?" He winked slyly at the Roman, having in mind a neat scheme by which he might later assess a double tax. Unsuspecting Abrim told him.

"Ah!" breathed the publican, looking wise.

"Ah!" breathed Decimus.

For a moment they gazed at each other; then, "Boy, get out!" Abraham motioned

with authority, and Abrim, nothing loath, fled to carry his message to Nahbi ben Naphtali.

Decimus and Abraham put their heads together; the outcome was a plot that boded no good for the jeweler's household.

At the lower end of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus joined friends, while Caleb and Sargon proceeded along the shore toward Capernaum to finish their errand. With delight Caleb viewed the sparkling waters on which fishing boats floated gaily, and his joy knew no bounds as they drew near the magnificent city. Through beautiful groves they sauntered, admiring the luxurious palaces of the city's nobility and wealthy men.

"It must be in such a place that Salomon lives," said Caleb. "Father said he is one of the richest men of our nation. I hope we find him quickly."

"Yes; then we can see the sights," agreed Sargon.

"No, as soon as I deliver the package for his inspection, I'm going back to join Jesus and his companions."

"Ah, no! Let us stay here awhile," urged Sargon. "What is there to do back there in the country?"



All were eager to learn more about this new teacher.

Caleb agreed that there was nothing to see or do, particularly. "But," he argued, "soon it may be safe for me to return home, and I wish to learn all I can from the teacher and his band. I have been told that he does not like Jerusalem, and he may not come there, where I can learn of him. Do you know, Sargon, I feel different when I'm with him!"

The Babylonian Jew nodded in understanding. "So do I, Caleb. I only wish he were the Promised One, and would lead us against the Romans! But he wouldn't fight anything!"

"Yes, he will," contradicted Caleb warmly. "He's fighting the hardest fight there is, right now!"

"What's that?"

"Hate," explained Caleb. "We hate the Romans, and the Romans hate us. The Greeks hate us both, and none of us think kindly of anyone. Didn't you hear Jesus say that we all are brothers? That Jehovah is our Father?"

"How far will such ideas take him?" asked the worldly-minded Sargon. "Will they carry him to a place of authority with the Romans, or with his own people? Who wants to be friends with everyone else?"

Thus the two argued while approaching a palace that a slave pointed out as being that of Salomon ben Gershon.

Salomon received Caleb warmly, accepting his package and examining the contents with appreciative eye. "Ah, my Boy! These are exactly what I sought!" He held the pearls to the light, admiring the soft glow of them. "And the price?"

Caleb named the amount his father had set.

"Very well," agreed the man. "They are worth it." He rang for his steward, whom he instructed to bring gold.

"I am sorry," he said, while waiting for the man to return, "that I cannot keep my promise and take you to the carpenter you wished to know."

"Oh, I know him!" replied Caleb. In a few words he told of his meeting with Jesus and of the days spent in the northward journey.

"We did not hurry," he continued. "Father said it was not necessary that you have the jewels at any stated time; so I traveled slowly, stopping with Jesus for days at a time on the way. He said he had friends preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, who were to meet him from time to time to

talk their problems over, and I was glad to listen and learn from him."

Salomon understood. Seeing that, Caleb inquired, "Tell me, Sir, think you he is the Promised One? Will he deliver us?"

"From what?" Kindly the man's eyes gazed into Caleb's. "Save us from what?"

Sargon answered. "From the Romans!"

Salomon shook his head.

"I do not understand," said Caleb. "Why do you ask me that?"

"Well," continued Salomon, "from what do we need to be saved?" He paced back and forth thoughtfully. "Are we in greater danger from the Romans than we are from ourselves? Are we not beset by sins, by greed, selfishness, and uncharitableness? Do we not need to be saved from those?"

Caleb's eyes lighted with a new vision. "Oh, that's what Jesus means when he tells us to love one another! But," with falling face, "it is hard to love the Romans!"

Salomon laughed softly. "Of a truth it is! But no doubt it is hard for Jesus to love us and our wickedness; yet he does it. He loves everyone."

The steward returned with the gold, interrupting the conversation.

Sargon would have accepted an invitation to remain in the luxurious home with its beautiful surroundings on the lake shore, but Caleb said, "You may stay, Sargon; I'm going back."

"Oh, I shall go also," growled Sargon, glancing longingly at the restful court of the house. How nice it would be to loiter there!

Caleb, intending to travel rapidly, carried nothing but the bare necessities, a wallet with some dried fish and a few flat loaves such as the common people ate. These, with such fruit as might be found growing wild along the water, would be sufficient.

In the passing days the two met with many interesting travelers, a great number of whom, like themselves, were seeking the man whose fame had spread abroad. In the throng that grew greater the farther the young men journeyed, were terribly maimed men, women, and children. There were blind persons, led by friends; and lepers, keeping apart from the others, whom they regarded with their sad eyes. All were on the same errand. All sought the man who might cure them. Had he not cured others?

"Yes," agreed Caleb, "I have seen him do

it. A dying babe recovered while he held it in his arms."

"Oh, Caleb," objected Sargon, who was inclined to doubt the story. "Maybe you imagined it. You said he didn't say any charms over it. How do you know that the child was even sick?"

"No, he said no charms," agreed Caleb, who had witnessed the wonderful event, "but he held the child close to his heart, and his lips moved. I thought he prayed; then the child raised itself up, reaching out its arms. It was healed."

Breathlessly people crowded around the young man, listening to the wonderful story; then, off they hurried, the sooner to reach the wonder-worker. Some murmured words of thanksgiving that the Almighty had sent such a man to them, while others gloated over the tasks they would perform when they should be cured.

Denser and denser grew the crowd near the spot where some had said Jesus had gone to pray, seeking quietness. Closer and closer they pressed. Caleb, followed by Sargon, moved around seeking some of the men whom they had previously seen with the car-

penter, and while so doing, they heard a voice behind them. "Sargon! Caleb! Wait!"

It was Adab, the Assyrian trader, who had traveled northward seeking them. Delighted to see his friendly face, the young men followed when he beckoned, and listened in anger and amazement to the tale he brought.

"When you sent money to the publican, Caleb," Adab said, clenching his hands, "he and the Roman seized the pretext of smuggled goods. Abraham declared all Nahbi's property forfeit, and even now he may have turned the family into the street. As for you, my Boy, it gives the Roman an added excuse for seizing you and sending you to Rome in chains. It will be said that you were taken in payment for your father's debt."

Horried the young man gazed at the bearded trader, questioning him as to what could be done.

"There is nothing to be done just now. We shall need to keep quiet and watch an opportunity to escape them."

A movement in the crowd interrupted Adab. There was a swaying back and forth as a group approached. "See, Sargon," cried Caleb, for a moment forgetting his own troubles. "It is Jesus! And John and James."

The Carpenter turned a kindly smile upon his young friends, but continued speaking to his companions, whose faces were anxious. Others of his company approached and stopped to talk with the young men, commenting on the size of the crowd and the distance from any town. He went up into a mountain where he found a place from which to speak to the people. Group after group there was, stretched far up the side of the hill and down toward the lowland, men, women, and children. Jews, Greeks, some curious Romans attracted from the main-traveled highway were there. Honest men, thieves, cheats, beggars, cripples, strong men, earnest men seeking this new kingdom of God that was being talked about; hypocrites, seeking a new garment to cover their dishonesty, were anxious to hear this carpenter. Hard working laborers were seeking a message of hope, disdainful Pharisees were seeking a reasonable excuse for silencing this strange teacher who was growing more powerful every day. All were eager to learn more about this new teacher.

He began with:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed

are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

Sargon turned to Caleb with disappointment in his voice. "He will never lead us against the Romans, for his doctrines are of peace," he whispered.

"By a miracle he will free us. Has he not done many strange things? Have you not seen enough to make you believe in him? But listen to his words, are they not as one who has authority?" Caleb replied, turning to hear more from the teacher.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. . . Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him."

In the crowd Caleb and Sargon became separated from Adab and at last found themselves far from the center of the group. Suddenly Sargon felt his arm seized, and Caleb hissed in his ear. "There! See? Decimus! We must fly!"

It was true. Decimus was one of the curious mob who had come from the highway to see the famous teacher, and in amazement he had heard the message. Now he was standing apart beneath a tree, pondering.

Trying to avoid being seen by the Roman, Caleb drew Sargon toward a dense thicket in which he hoped to escape; but fate seemed to be against him, for Decimus saw his furtive movements and a moment later recognized him. "Phranza! Chuza!" he called to his slaves. "Seize them, those boys! Quick, before they are lost in the trees!"

At that Caleb broke into a desperate run, determined that he would not be caught. Through the thin growth at the edge of the forest he raced, Sargon close at his heels.

Far in the gloom of the trees Caleb came to a stop, thinking that they had distanced their pursuers.

Sargon threw himself upon the ground, panting. "There, Caleb," he said, wiping

the sweat from his face. "Did your father not tell you that no good would come of associating with that carpenter?"

Caleb did not reply, for he was resting upon the ground.

"If we had stayed in Capernaum, as I wished, this would not have happened. Your father was right."

"It may be," agreed Caleb. "Father does not believe the rumors that this is the Messiah; and he did not wish me to be led astray by a deceiver. Perhaps this would not have happened if I had not returned to be with Jesus; but my father also taught me that all things work together for good for those who love God. Jesus loves God. So do I. Things may turn out well after all."

He was rudely interrupted by a noise and found both he and Sargon surrounded by soldiers. In alarm he jumped to his feet, but could not escape. As he was jostled, he felt a hand reach under his garment and quickly jerk away the bag of gold which he carried.

Almost at the same instant, Decimus snapped, "Away with him! Let him not escape!"

CHAPTER TEN.

Sargon Seeks Dorcas

HAVING disposed of the captured Caleb, Decimus returned to the crowd hoping to hear more from the amazing teacher. "I could almost believe," he murmured, "that he is, truly all they claim, a Son of God; yet many of his own people do not believe it!"

He listened to the calm voice that carried far through the quiet air.

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Though shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say

unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

Listening, Decimus grinned, wondering if the jeweler's son, who seemed to be one of the man's followers, would be inclined to pray for him. Remembering what he had heard this strange teacher say, Decimus became thoughtful.

In times past he had listened to the words of the greatest philosophers in the Roman forum; but never had he heard words which so disturbed him. While he pondered, he missed some of the man's words. He shook himself, listening again. Some one had asked a question, and the teacher, his face shining with eagerness was replying:

“If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?”

Decimus was inclined to smile at the man's simpleness. He spoke so casually of forgiveness and kindness. It was not the way of the world to forgive so easily; nor were men ac-

customed to meekness. In the only world that the young Roman knew, might made right; but the man was answering another question.

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other!”

Decimus smiled again. This was teaching for slaves, evidently. Surely not for freemen and patricians, who had no master. It appeared that some one else in the crowd had a similar thought and was inquiring for an explanation, which came with uncompromising force, striking home to all who heard, including Decimus:

“You cannot serve God and mammon!”

There could be no doubt as to the teacher's meaning. Decimus turned away with an uneasy shrug of his shoulders. The young man had a sudden picture of some of his own recent transactions cast upon his inner vision. It troubled him somewhat. If there really were a God, such as this Jesus announced so forcibly, a loving, just God who had the well-

being of his children at heart, the young Roman wanted to know more about him. How would he regard Decimus' actions against the family of Nahbi ben Naphtali?

"Why did I let my curiosity lure me from the highway? Having been so foolish, why did I follow this man from place to place, listening to such teachings? Albus would laugh, did he but know it!"

Memory of his friend sent a pang of homesickness through Decimus, causing him to long for the familiar sights and sounds of Rome. He wondered how affairs went there, and took pleasure in picturing his friend's delight when he should behold the well-mated pair of slaves which Decimus would bring as a gift from the east.

Filled with grief and despair Caleb was forced to march toward the South. His arms were bound tightly behind him, and he was chained to other prisoners before and behind so that there was little chance to escape. To walk in the hot sun was bad enough, but to walk hour after hour with bound arms was terrible. The young slave suffered from sore feet and from thirst, but this mattered not to the guards who cared for nothing but to reach

their destination and receive pay for their labors.

The nights were spent by the captives in the handiest prison, where Caleb's blood turned cold at the revolting sights. The typical slave prison might well have been a place of eternal punishment for evildoers. It presented a picture of men and women in their worst aspect, dehumanized by misery and despair. Untended, when ill, scarcely clothed, they passed their nights in filthy and pestilential surroundings that decent human beings could not even picture to their imaginations. They were treated like wild beasts. Were they not mere slaves? Slaves, such as could easily be stolen or purchased at will? Why need anyone care for them?

Caleb gazed in horror when first he was thrust into one of these foul places to spend the night. Could it be that these creatures before him were human? Some were bleeding from scourge wounds. Some were emaciated from starvation, that being the particular punishment to which they had been subjected. The young man shuddered, cowering down in a corner, away from contact with the others.

Weary and filled with anguish at his plight,

he at last fell into a fitful sleep, moaning and tossing as horrid dreams disturbed him. These pictured to him his beloved parents and sister in circumstances similar to his own, and he cried out.

While he slept, a villainous looking prisoner crept toward him. The man was huge of frame, and scarred from head to foot from scourgings, and in the dull glare from a torch outside it could be seen that his head bore a wide gaping wound. Closer and closer he crept to the boy, his hands opening and closing, and his lips twitching. He breathed heavily, as one trying to restrain his emotions. For a second he remained motionless beside Caleb, and then with the utmost stealth his fingers stole toward the younger man's girdle.

Feeling this faintest touch, Caleb awoke with a shriek of fear, which was followed by one after another as he saw the horrible face and gleaming eyes above him.

With a roar of anger the guard threw open the door and strode in with a torch. "Ah, dog!" he growled at the older man, who had cowered back into the corner with upraised hands. "It was you, was it?" With that he lashed out with a *flagellum*, striking the



"You cannot serve God and mammon!"

starved fellow repeatedly with the metal-dotted thongs.

Shuddering Caleb heard the sharp bits of metal strike the unprotected flesh. "Stop!" he cried, leaping forward. "It was I who cried out. Stop!"

Somewhere in the darkness there was a hoarse laugh. Some brutalized slave could not understand such actions.

"So? It was you, eh?" sneered the guard. It made no difference to him whom he struck.

When the guard was gone, there was no sound save the moans of the unconscious young man. The other man crept forward and fingered Caleb's garments finding after a moment what he sought, a crust of bread which Caleb had saved from a former meal. Keeping sharp eyes on the other prisoners, the man devoured the tiny piece of food with satisfaction; then he crouched beside Caleb who had tried to save him from punishment. His brutalized mind could not understand, but it could appreciate.

Through the long hours Caleb tossed and moaned, from time to time murmuring a few words of prayer, calling upon Jehovah and Jesus indiscriminately.

"Come! All out!" The sharp command

sent the prisoners hurrying into the open, none lagging behind lest the lash hasten their movements. The huge slave dragged Caleb to his feet with hoarse words of encouragement which the young man scarce heard or understood. As they were together when they came into the open air, they were tied that way for the day's march, which was fortunate for Caleb, as the gigantic fellow supported him along the way.

The long line of plodding slaves was one continuous murmur of petitions for mercy. Hopeless, miserable, starving men and women dragged themselves along, caring not whether they lived or died, though much preferring the latter. Caleb would not give up hope. Surely Adab and Sargon would do something! They knew what had happened and would carry word to his parents. With these thoughts he tried to keep up his courage.

In snatches of conversation from time to time Caleb learned something about his companion, who said his name was Simon; and to Simon he told about himself and how he had been seized while listening to the wonderful teacher.

"Oh, Simon, if Jesus knew what you and I now know about the way men are treated by

the Romans, he would not waste his time teaching love and kindness! He has power, wonderful power, and I believe he is the Messiah. He could say but a word, and these oppressors of mankind would fall before him like leaves, and we should be free!"

In the silence which followed, Caleb wondered if he would ever see the teacher again, and he remembered his father's warnings that he would come to grief if he followed after this notorious teacher. "I came to grief, surely," acknowledged Caleb, "but it would have happened anyway. It cannot be blamed on Jesus! I'm glad I did seek him! Even if I never see him again, it has been good to know him, and I now know how Jehovah wants me to live." Somewhat comforted with these thoughts, he sighed wearily and plodded onward toward the setting sun.

In the meantime Jesus went on his way carrying his teachings to all manner of men. Decimus, joining others of his countrymen who were *en route* to Jerusalem, traveled leisurely, forgetting for the time the prisoner he had sent to Cæsarea to await him. Half-way to Jerusalem Decimus met Abraham, who brought the news that he had seized and

sold the possessions of Nahbi ben Naphtali and that the members of the family were being held for disposition at the instructions of Decimus.

“What care I, Publican?” came the haughty inquiry. Decimus who had attained his end, now had no need for Abraham; therefore, he troubled not to be courteous. If he again needed an accomplice, gold would buy Abraham again, or another. It mattered not. “What care I? ’Twas the boy I sought. Do as you like with the others.”

Ah! That meant more money for Abraham. To be sure, Nahbi and his wife would not bring much in the market, but the girl was a beauty and would bring many tinkling pieces of gold.

While Abraham yet gloated, he heard a glad cry behind him. “Abraham! My friend!”

“Why, Levi, son of Alphæus!” exclaimed Abraham, embracing the speaker. “Whence came you? And why this guise?”

He stepped back to gaze in astonishment at his old friend’s bare feet and cheap garments.

“Call me no more Levi, but Matthew. This guise is not like what I used to wear, is it, friend Abraham? But I am not now a tax-gatherer.”

“What? Did some one complain of you to the governor?”

“Complain?” Matthew laughed. “If they had, what cared the governor so long as he profited by my labors? No; I now serve a greater master than governor or emperor.”

Naturally, Abraham stared. He led Matthew aside and motioned him to a seat. “Tell me, Matthew.”

“Well, Abraham,” began Matthew, fanning his heated face with a branch from the tree which shaded them, “it is a long story, one which you will smile about, as have many others.”

“Tell it, Matthew. Have I not known you from boyhood, and have I reason to doubt anything you say? Nay! Speak on.”

“You know, Abraham, the promises that were given our fathers, that the Almighty would send a Deliverer? A Messiah?”

Abraham nodded. “So long has it been, Matthew, since I worshiped with the faithful, that I had almost forgotten; but I remember.”

“On a day when I was overwhelmed by a rush of business in the gate of the city, Abraham, gold heaped before me, my gold, and while the curses of travelers fell upon my

head like hail from above, there came a simple traveler who looked at me with kindly eyes. After a moment he said to me—to me, Matthew, the publican, ‘Follow me.’”

Matthew paused to gaze dreamily into the distance, recalling the familiar scene in the gate. “He said, ‘Follow me,’ and I did.”

“What? You followed him? Where did he go?”

Matthew answered simply, “Into the wilderness to pray.”

Abraham stared. Matthew must be mad! That would explain his poor garments. Matthew saw the look and smiled. “He went into the wilderness to pray, taking me, the publican, with him as a friend.”

“Why, Matthew!” exclaimed Abraham, smoothing his rich garment with his hands, “what manner of man was he, that he would associate with you? Did you not fear he would call a mob to stone you? They would gladly have done it.”

“What manner of man?” Matthew repeated the question softly. “A man of God, Abraham, a man of God, perhaps the Messiah. I know not, but I believe. I love him! I have seen him heal the sick, make the blind to see,

cast out devils, yea, Abraham, I have seen him perform all manner of miracles!"

Abraham rose quickly to his feet, staring at Matthew. "Matthew," he muttered, "speak you of that Galilean called Jesus?"

The other man nodded.

"I have heard much of him, Matthew. Tell me more."

Nothing loathe, Matthew talked long and earnestly, causing Abraham to exclaim in amazement from time to time, until the long shadows of evening warned them to seek shelter.

As they approached an inn, Matthew laid his hand in friendly manner upon Abraham's arm, saying, "And what he taught me applies also to you, friend Abraham. You cannot serve God and also serve Rome! Good and evil go not together!"

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In the excitement which attended the seizing of Caleb, Sargon had fought valiantly to help his cousin; but seeing that he could do nothing, he contented himself by snatching from beneath Caleb's garment the bag of gold, thrusting it immediately into his own girdle. "There! The Roman hasn't that,

anyway," he exulted. "And much may be accomplished with gold."

In the jostling mob the young man sought Adab, to whom he told all that had happened. Adab listened with flashing eyes, his hand clutching the handle of his dagger. When Sargon finished, Adab said, "Boy, do you go quickly to Jerusalem with the gold. It may be that Nahbi ben Naphtali is still at liberty and in need of it. I'll try to effect a rescue of his son, or at least keep track of him so that an effort may be made to purchase his freedom."

He stood fingering his beard thoughtfully. His last words had called up a new line of thought. "Stay, Sargon," he said, motioning the young man to remain. "If you fail by any chance to find Nahbi, do you seek the tax-gatherer. Offer him gold to aid in freeing Caleb and his parents. Stop at no price! If the bag contains not enough, why, I have more! Never shall it be said that Adab, of Babylon, withheld gold when it was needed by a friend!"

Upon receiving this advice, Sargon paid for passage with a caravan which was going to the city.

Upon arriving in Jerusalem, he hurried to

Nahbi ben Naphtali's house, there to find strangers who knew nothing of the jeweler's whereabouts. To the neighbors Sargon went, pale of face and with trembling voice. "Tell me, where has the jeweler been taken, and his daughter, was she with him?" He flushed with embarrassment when he mentioned the fair young girl who had won his heart. "Tell me, is she safe, or was she carried away from her parents?"

Either the neighbors knew nothing or they feared to talk, and in despair Sargon sought for Abrim in the vicinity of the wine shop of Gaius, the Roman slave. Here, too, his search was unavailing. Greek Georgias, without his child companion, snored in drunken sleep, as usual, and no one else seemed to know anything about the water boy.

Nothing remained, therefore, but to seek the publican at his gate; and resolved that this was one person he most certainly would find, even if it called for a journey to Rome, Sargon set out for the city wall, a question repeating itself over and over in his mind. "Where is Dorcas? Where is Dorcas?"

CHAPTER ELEVEN.

Woe to Nahbi ben Naphтали

IN the meantime, what of Nahbi ben Naphтали and his wife and daughter? All too rapidly the weeks passed until came the time of the new moon when Abraham, the publican, had said he would expect Nahbi to make a tremendous payment for alleged smuggling of jewels or be seized for surety.

In fear and trembling the jeweler went among his friends, trying to negotiate loans; but what Jew, knowing Roman heartlessness, would lend under the circumstances? If it was merely a matter of revenge, the payment would be followed immediately by another trumped-up charge, failure to meet which would result in loss of the borrowed money.

Each time Nahbi left his door, it was with earnest supplications to Jehovah to keep his loved ones safe until his return. Each time he returned, it was with bated breath and intently listening ears. Would he hear the girlish voice of Dorcas as she sat at her embroidery, and the capable tones of his wife's voice directing the maids?

Day after day passed in swift succession, bringing at last the designated time, and with it, true to his promise, or threat, came Abraham with the retinue of the chief publican whose aid he had evoked. Coldly Abraham listened to Nahbi's pleas for more time, and to his assertions of innocence of the charge against him.

"Ha! Do you forget, Sir Jeweler, that your own son sent me the tax for the jewels you sent away with him? Smuggling! Ha, ha! What do you call that? Eh?"

"But it was not intentional smuggling! It was necessary that—"

"Yes, yes! That's always the way. There is some necessity that forces dishonest actions."

"You should know," snapped Nahbi. "Taxgatherers often are forced by 'necessity' to bring woe upon their fellow countrymen!"

Abraham shrugged his shoulders. Harsh words had become commonplace with him. So long as gold came with them, what cared he? "Enough!" The publican motioned to his assistants, who quickly seized Nahbi's arms and held him despite his struggles.

"You know the law, ben Naphtali," said

Abraham, casting an appraising eye over the room. "If I do not realize enough from your possessions, you and your family are forfeit to make good the indebtedness."

"Ah, Jehovah!" breathed Nahbi. He thought his heart would burst.

The men went to the private portions of the house, soon returning with Rachel and her daughter, who hurried to Nahbi and clung to his arms.

With haggard face and drawn lips, the jeweler heard the strangers moving around the dwelling, opening chests, commenting upon the furnishings, joking among themselves. Into the women's apartments they went, returning with heaps of finery which they piled carelessly on the floor.

Dazed, the mother and daughter saw their cherished belongings roughly handled. There was the gauzy veil that Rachel had secretly embroidered and garnished with tiny pearls against Dorcas' wedding day; and there also were the splendid garments which she, herself, had worn long ago when Nahbi took her into his home as a bride.

Next came articles from Caleb's room, a girdle that Dorcas had woven when her tiny fingers first handled threads. At sight of it

she sobbed. Where was Caleb, the beloved lad who had been harried from his home because of Decimus, the Roman? Was he safe? Dorcas sank to her knees, burying her face in her mother's clothes, and from her lips came a whispered prayer.

"Pray not, Daughter," commanded Nahbi, drawing himself upright. "Pray not. It is vain."

"Why, Husband!" exclaimed Rachel in surprise.

"Yes, I say it. It is vain, Wife! Have I not from my youth worshiped Jehovah? Have I not obeyed his commandments? Have I not given freely to the poor and needy? Long years I have looked hopefully toward the day when the Promised One should be sent to lead us to freedom. And," here his voice choked, "and now hope is done! Jehovah has deserted us!"

"Oh, no, Father! Say not so," said Dorcas, clasping him tightly in her arms. "He may yet save us! Forbid me not to pray, Father. Did not Jehovah send me health when I prayed?"

Memory of the carpenter who had taught her to pray in faith, and of the wonderful teacher about whom he had told, came to the

maiden. Korah, the carpenter, had said that this teacher was thought by some to be the Messiah. Oh, if that were true?

“Father!”

“Well, Child?”

“You remember the carpenter who built my booth on the roof, and all he said about the wonderful man in the north, the one who performed miracles and taught people about the heavenly Father? He said he believed that man was the Promised One.”

“Child, talk no more of it.”

Loud voices caused them to turn and see Abraham approaching from the interior of the building.

“See, Daughter,” continued Nahbi, placing his arm protectingly around her shoulders, “they come to lead us away. Woe! Woe! If Jehovah had sent a savior, would this happen to us?” In that hopeless, despairing attitude did Nahbi, who had never seen or heard the wonderful teacher from the North, go with his guards from the home which had been so happy and prosperous.

The hostages were taken first to a local prison, there to pine in mental anguish for many weeks before being sent to the huge slave market on the coast where they were

held awaiting instructions as to their disposition.

While Sargon searched for Abraham, the taxgatherer, and for news of his uncle's family, his rage and dismay had time to cool; for the weeks passed and drew into the month of Shebat while he followed every possible clue.

Shebat, the month which the desert Arabs called "the father of rains," and which later generations would call February, was not a pleasant time for being abroad, although almond and peach trees were in full bloom and, in the lower and warmer parts of the country the orange trees were laden with golden fruit. These were pleasant sights, indeed, but on the other hand were the teeming rains.

Rain? Truly, one who never moved abroad in Palestine in this season has no idea of a rain. In blinding sheets it descended upon the weary Sargon, now grown thin and haggard from worry. Sheets of water that blotted out the landscape fell by the hour, and in the villages where the houses were made of sun-baked brick, the walls could be seen to visibly melt away. The roads were veritable rivers; but as soon as the clouds broke,

as, fortunately, they often did for days at a time, the water disappeared and travelers again ventured forth.

From Jerusalem to Capernaum, thence to the little hill town round about, and again southward Sargon traveled without finding those whom he sought. He inquired as to the whereabouts of Jesus. Some said the great teacher had gone into Phœnicia there to preach the gospel. Jesus and his companions moved about constantly, carrying their wonderful message to isolated villages. Sargon did not tarry, but made haste to go into Phœnicia. Here he followed wherever he heard Jesus was teaching, hoping to learn from this man a way to deal with the Roman, Decimus, and the publican, Abraham. Always it seemed to Sargon he arrived just after Jesus departed, leaving very few clues as to his destination.

Discouraged, Sargon decided to return to Jerusalem, for he had heard that Jesus had gone from Phœnicia southward. If only he could find Adab, that doughty traveler would know how to handle all the difficulties of the case! Sargon had no idea where Adab was, and he had no other friend from whom to seek advice and encouragement.

Had he not? The young man stopped suddenly with an exclamation. Why had he not remembered long ago about the friendly Mary and Mark, in Jerusalem? They were well known and no doubt could put him in touch with some one who would help him, if help could be had against the Romans.

Sargon kept to the roads whereon he met a continual stream of people, for the military roads were well policed and were almost as safe from robbers as Roman barracks. This fact led to much intercourse between cities and villages. Everyone traveled. A poor man would go on foot, his garments well bound up away from his legs, or at best would travel upon a half-starved ass. His more fortunate brothers would probably use a mule or a gaily caparisoned horse, depending upon their influence.

A man of considerable wealth, unless he wished, as Salomon when he went to Jerusalem for the jewels, to travel without attracting attention, would be carried in luxurious litters, high on the shoulders of slaves, or swung between beasts. Much gold could easily be expended upon such a litter, for they were ornately carved and gilded, with brilliant curtains and soft cushions.

For more speedy traveling, a man with gold could use a private or a hired carriage with two wheels, and he could have his choice for sufficient money, of mules or swift ponies which would travel for a stated distance before being exchanged at a posthouse for fresh animals.

Above all these, however, was the man who wished to travel in great ostentation. Nothing but the finest would suit him, and usually he owned his own equipage. This would be such as would cause the yokels along the way to stand open-mouthed, gazing in awe at such wealth. Well they might, for this man more than likely would be in a great gilded coach drawn by champing horses whose high-thrown heads proclaimed that they appreciated their gold-studded harness and fluttering ribbons. Behind would come a huge retinue of slaves, to further proclaim their master's importance.

All this would have caused the journey to Jerusalem to pass more quickly for Sargon; but the wasted weeks in searching for Jesus and his followers had dragged into months and summer had passed without any news of his friends who were no doubt waiting in some slave prison for the Roman, Decimus,

to finish his sight-seeing and business in the country. The thought of Dorcas possibly being sold to some unscrupulous Roman, or of her serving Decimus, was almost too great for Sargon; his heart was heavy within him.

He had little trouble passing the gate, for he was thin, weary, and travel-stained. He made his way immediately to the home of Mary and Mark where he was graciously received. Mary told Sargon how Abraham had accused Nahbi ben Naphtali of smuggling jewels into the city, of the levy of a tax which could not be met, of Nahbi's frantic attempts to raise the money; finally of the ransacking of the house and the carrying away of the family. No one dared to interfere, but watched with abated breath behind closed shutters.

After the story Sargon sat with head bowed until Mary tried to assure him of God's care and reminded him of the many miracles which Jesus had performed. In turn Sargon told Mary of the wondrous cures Jesus had accomplished in the North. Saddened, the young man told of how the Pharisees sought to trap Jesus on many occasions. Finally he told of how they took up stones and would have cast them at him; but Jesus hid himself,

and went out of the temple where he had been talking. Some thought he had come to Jerusalem.

Meanwhile Jesus had left the North, keeping away from the highways because he could no longer walk openly on account of the plots of the Pharisees. After visiting with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, he rested for a time before crossing the Jordan to Peræa.

When assured by Mary that Jesus had retired for a time, Sargon turned northward again, hardly knowing or caring where he went, but vaguely hoping to catch a word of the whereabouts of the Assyrian, Adab. A half-formed plan began shaping itself in his mind of enlisting his father's aid, if Adab could not be found; but that would take time to journey to Babylon. The desert could not be crossed by foot except by way of Damascus, for there were few oases. Through Jericho he journeyed, lingering in the market place, hoping to find the Assyrian trader.

As he turned upon the highway, he began reviewing the events which had changed his life during the last few months. How as a carefree and thoughtless youth he had journeyed to Jerusalem! How the meeting of his uncle's family had changed him, especially

Dorcas! Ah, Dorcas, she it was who had caught his fancy! She would adorn any man's home with her beauty; no small wonder the Roman had wanted her. Sargon raged within him. What could he do, how could he help those who so lately had been strangers, but now were so dear to him? Little had he realized where his journey would lead him that Sabbath eve when he and Abrim had followed Caleb as he fled across the house tops into the darkness. How frightened he had been when Caleb had fallen down into the court of Mary and Mark's home! Lazarus, who was so gentle and wise had helped them to escape from the city; could he help now? Sargon wondered. Lazarus was a man who had traveled, who had many friends, who was closely associated with Jesus, and had plenty of means! Better it would be to retrace his steps to Bethany than to continue to look for Adab, or to take the long journey to Babylon, for he might be too late to help the family of Nahbi ben Naphtali!

As rapidly as he could, Sargon traveled toward Bethany, being forced, now, to use gold from Caleb's bag to pay for lodgings at night. This resulted in his coming face to face, one evening, with the taxgatherer, Abraham,

who was shivering over a brazier in the court of a country inn.

The young man was surprised at the other's altered appearance. His face was softened in some manner, and there were worried lines around the eyes. Sargon noticed that the hands which were extended over the coals did not glitter with rings as they had been wont to do.

Abraham looked up at the other's approach, making room that Sargon could warm himself. "Sir," boldly said the young man, standing erect before the Jew and gazing into his eyes, "what have you done with my uncle, Nahbi ben Naphtali and his family?"

The man made no answer, appearing to ponder the question.

"Answer me," commanded Sargon. "Are they safe? Is his daughter unharmed?"

Abraham merely nodded. He turned his eyes to the glowing charcoal and ignored the other until Sargon cried, "You think you are safe because you serve the Romans? Ha, ha! Think you I have no help? I have a friend who will put all your Romans to flight, and when I tell him of your vileness in selling into slavery members of your own race, when I tell him that, I'll ask him to strike you dead!

Better that than that the earth be burdened with your villainy any longer."

The publican was astonished at the boy's wild words, and did not interrupt him until he finished. "Boy," he said calmly, "you are mad."

"Mad? Have I not right to be mad? What have you done with my uncle? Where has your Roman friend taken my cousin Caleb? Mad? Perhaps I am."

The host brought a tray of food to Abraham, setting it on a low stool beside the fire. The man began to eat, thoughtlessly; then after pondering for a moment, he called for water and bathed his hands thoroughly. Glancing at Sargon as though half ashamed, he muttered a prayer before partaking of the food.

Strange, indeed, was the change which had taken place in Abraham since his talk with Matthew. Years upon years he had lived carelessly, observing none of the religious practices of his people; but upon learning of the godly man who made a friend of publicans and poor men, he had been impressed. When Matthew proclaimed that the man had been called the Messiah, Abraham gave heed. One by one he recalled the teachings of his

parents, and without fully realizing the change that was taking place, had become more merciful in his dealings with the people.

Contributing to the mental state that induced this change was the manner in which Decimus had dismissed Abraham as soon as he had served the Roman's evil purposes. Abraham was a hard man, not easily offended; but the Roman's actions had suddenly brought home to him the fact that he could claim friends neither among the conquering Romans nor among his own people. Being a publican, a taxgatherer for the Romans, he was a social outcast.

Learning that there was at least one person who would not turn aside from him on that account, Abraham had without knowing it changed slightly for the better. He secretly hoped that he might see this strange friend of Matthew's. He had heard much about him in the last few months, but never had he happened to be in any of the crowds where the Nazarene carpenter taught.

"Boy!" Abraham paused in his eating to turn toward the glowering Sargon.

"Boy, you spoke of a mighty friend who could strike me dead. There is only one per-

son who might do that. Did you speak of the teacher from the North? This man Jesus?"

Sargon nodded.

"H-m-m!" Abraham picked thoughtfully at the fruit on the tray. "Know you where he is? I've heard about him, and I should like to listen to him."

"No, I don't know where he is; but he wouldn't have anything to do with a man like you!"

"Be that as it may, my young Friend. I've heard something about that, too."

Abraham pushed the tray aside. "On the morrow I'll reach Jerusalem and finish a business I have on hand; then I'll seek my friend Matthew, and this wonder-working friend of yours. I'm curious."

Abraham did not know that hundreds of men then, and thousands upon thousands in generations to come, sought the wonder-worker for the same reason, curiosity.

The publican and the young man left the inn early in the morning, traveling within sight of each other along the highway leading through Bethany to the mighty city on the hills.

There were many wealthy travelers on the road as they drew near the village, all moving

slowly toward a throng at a certain house. Sargon hurried forward. They were nearing the home of Lazarus and his sisters. What could have attracted all these strangers? Not a feast, for everyone was clothed in mourning! What could be wrong?

“Wrong?” A man turned when Sargon addressed a question to him. “Why, my friend, Lazarus, is dead. Already has he been laid in the tomb.”

“Dead? Lazarus?”

Sargon grew pale. He had so counted on help or advice from Lazarus.

“Yes, dead, and we come to mourn with his sisters.”

CHAPTER TWELVE.

Lazarus Dead

LAZARUS was dead! He from whom Sargon had hoped to obtain assistance in locating Nahbi ben Naphtali's family! Distress and discouragement filled the young man's heart at the news.

Sargon skirted the crowd to hurry ahead. He was surprised to find, slowly approaching the house, Jesus and a group of his friends. One who evidently had just joined them was remonstrating with them.

"But why did you let him come? Know you not that he will be stoned if the priests and Pharisees see him?"

One of Jesus' friends shrugged his shoulders. "He fears no man! He says that all is in the hands of the heavenly Father, and that naught can befall except by his will; but see, there comes Martha."

Having heard that Jesus was coming at last, the sorrowing woman went to meet him. Along the road she came, caring not for the water that remained from the early morning

rain. Lazarus was gone. What else mattered?

The group parted to permit her approach, and Jesus held out his hands, which she clasped tightly. "Lord," she murmured softly, "if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

The friends of the teacher glanced at him when she spoke this gentle reproach, for had she not sent him word days ago that his dear friend, Lazarus, was sick? Had he not delayed until now Lazarus lay in his burial place? To them it seemed that Jesus might just as well have come earlier, for then the danger from his enemies was no greater than it was today.

In response to Martha's words Jesus laid his hand softly on her head with words which have since brought untold comfort to others in sorrow. "Martha, thy brother shall rise again."

"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." How could he so trifle with her sorrow? Did not all good Jews know of the resurrection, and hope for it? Jesus gave her no time for further thought.

Then came the astounding declaration

that caused Sargon and the others to draw near in amazement. One pushed the young Babylonian aside in his eagerness to draw closer, and Sargon noticed with anger that it was Abraham, the taxgatherer.

"*I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?*"

"Yea, Lord," came the instantaneous reply. Martha did not pause to ponder the matter of physical and spiritual death and life. Her heart spoke promptly.

"I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

Beside Sargon, Abraham muttered. "He speaks mighty words; but the fact remains that the woman's brother is dead! How will he get around that?"

Martha paused not for further conversation with her beloved friend, but hurried indoors to quietly seek Mary to bring her without attracting the attention of the guests. She knew that in the throng of rich men who had come to share her sorrow would be many who would delight in an opportunity to denounce the newcomer.

Mary understood, and as quietly as possible made her way from the house. Her very carefulness drew the attention of others, causing them to follow out of curiosity. Behind them rose the shrill cry of paid mourners who cast dust and ashes over their heads while others played mournful tunes on stringed instruments. Ignoring all this, Mary ran to Jesus and cast herself, weeping, at his feet.

Clasping his hands tightly, as though to control his own feelings, Jesus looked from her prostrate form to the weeping men and women who had followed from the house. All were now silent, waiting to see what this wonder-working friend of the dead man would do. Had he at last met his defeat? Was he more than human?

Jesus raised Mary to her feet, asking, "Where have you laid him?"

One of the group, motioning, said, "Come and see."

With tears streaming down his face, Jesus followed, supporting Mary and Martha on his arms. Their grief wrenched his heart.

Behind, in a dense mass, followed his friends and those who had come from the house. Many others, seeing something unusual going on, hurried after them.

From richly dressed men around him Sargon heard various comments. One remarked how Jesus must have loved the dead man, judging from his tears. Another wondered if this stranger, who had made the blind to see, might not be able to do something for his dead friend.

Arriving at the tomb, which was a cave with a stone against it, Jesus groaned. He turned to his friends. "Take away the stone."

Startled, Martha would have dissuaded him, saying, "Lord, by this time he stinketh: for he hath been dead four days."

"Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

There were murmurs among the throng at these words. What did he mean? Was he blaspheming? Already he had been accused of that crime. A group of Pharisees who held their garments well away from contact with their less godly neighbors glanced at one another with looks of triumph. They would trap this fellow yet!

The men lifted the stone from its place amidst a breathless silence, and fell back, leaving Jesus alone at the side of the opening. He glanced over the hostile faces before

him, then raised his eyes reverently to heaven. When he spoke, it was softly; yet everyone could hear. "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me."

With an awe-inspiring authority his voice cried, "Lazarus, come forth."

Sargon shivered and moved closer to the man next to him. Could it be that a man already dead could be made to live?

At a little distance Abraham looked around in evident fright. Many things troubled his conscience, and this scene caused him to think of them. Suppose this was the Messiah before him? Was he, Abraham, ready to meet him?

"Ah, Matthew!" Abraham recognized his friend and grabbed his arm. "Praise be to Jehovah that you are here. I am afraid!"

Nor was he the only one. Pale of face, in trepidation, others in the crowd waited, straining their eyes toward the dark cave, wherein a movement of white could be detected.

"Ah, Father!"

"Save us, O Lord!"

“Jehovah guard us!” There were cries, gasps, and wild snatches of prayer; for Lazarus, tightly bound in his grave wrappings, moved, sat up, rose to his feet, came forth into the open!

Many men and women fell to their knees, convinced that the slender man at the side of the tomb was, truly, the Son of God. How else could this miracle have been brought about? Abraham and Sargon were among those who murmured, “He is the Messiah! The Savior!”

On the other hand, the Pharisees went muttering on their way, plotting against this man whose teachings would bring their own to naught.

Sargon did not see Abraham again until several weeks later when he found a crowd in a village market listening to the teacher. Jesus was seated beside the fountain answering questions which the crowd asked. All were curious about his wonderful message of love, and asked for explanations. Salvation? How were they to obtain it? How could they love their enemies? How could they escape sin? What was sin? Could they have everlasting life? How?

Sargon stopped to listen when he saw Jesus.

A handsome young man was passing; and he, too, stopped. A magnificent garment hung from his shoulders, and his turban was fastened with a glittering jewel. Upon his arms were circlets of gold, and the buckles of his sandals were of the same material.

Jesus smiled upon him, but did not speak directly to him, addressing his remarks to those closer to the fountain. Step by step the stranger drew near. The thoughtful expression on his face proclaimed the fact that he was impressed by this man's replies to the inquiries. At last the young man asked a question of his own.

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?"

"Why callest thou me good?" inquired Jesus. A gentle smile took any sense of reproach from his words, however. "There is none good but one, and that is God." His calm eyes looked into the clear eyes of the young man. Without fear, and patiently the stranger waited for a reply to his question.

"If thou wilt enter into life," said Jesus slowly, "keep the commandments!"

Clearly the young man was surprised. He had expected something more.

“Why, Master,” he exclaimed. “All these things have I kept from my youth up!”

Jesus smiled. “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me.”

The youth’s face fell. Sell his possessions? Become poor, like these ill-fed people around him? Must he do that to gain everlasting life? He shuddered, and went his way. Selfishness conquered.

Another who had listened, gave an exclamation of satisfaction. “Ah, that’s what will give me relief! I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” Intent upon doing it while the resolve was strong, the speaker turned to hurry from the scene, almost knocking Sargon from his feet. It was Abraham.

The young man tried to stop him; but Abraham, recognizing him and knowing what he wanted, thrust him aside.

“Stop me not, Boy! I have that to settle with Decimus, the Roman, that brooks no delay!” He hurried onward, Sargon following closely.

“Yes!” continued Abraham, not caring that he spoke aloud. “I’ll settle with him; then

with the others. And then I'll follow this carpenter. I'll have peace. Peace!"

With that the man hurried away, leaving Sargon to wonder at the power which Jesus had to influence the lives of people who came in contact with him. Hoping that another visit to the city might be more fruitful of results, Sargon turned his face in that direction.

Walking disconsolately along the road under the city walls, wondering where to turn for help, Sargon heard a familiar voice hail him.

"Sargon! Wait." Turning, he beheld Abrim approaching, carefully supporting a sickly child. The water boy looked half ashamed of his kindness and seemed to feel that some explanation was required. "It's the child that Greek Georgias kept to lure money from the people," he said. "The poor youngster is possessed; and when he falls to the ground, people feel sorry and give Georgias money; but the little fellow never sees any of it!"

"Where are you taking him?" inquired Sargon in surprise. He knew that Abrim, himself, had no home. What would he do with this child? Besides, judging from some

of the vile language he had heard the boy use, he was hardly a fit guardian for the child.

Abrim looked more embarrassed. "Why, you know that Jesus who healed the babe out at Bethany?"

Well Sargon remembered the morning to which Abrim referred. He nodded.

"I've heard more about him lately," continued Abrim, digging his toes into the dust. He realized that Sargon was surprised and mystified. Anyone who knew the average hardened water carrier would have been. "I've heard that he does more wonderful things than that. One day I heard him tell some people that whatever they did for the little ones, they did for him."

Sargon waited a moment for Abrim to continue. "What about it? He's always saying things that no one exactly understands."

"We-l-l, I wanted to do something for him. But what was there I could do?" demanded Abrim, as though defending himself. "Then I remembered him." He nodded to the child. "Georgias calls him The Pest, though what Georgias will do without him, I don't know."

"Why, what are you going to do with him?" asked Sargon.

“I’m going to take him to Jesus to be cured!”

Appreciating the kindly thought behind the words and action, Sargon said, “Jesus will be with his friends at Bethany tonight. I’d go with you, but I must keep on the lookout for my friend, Adab. The Roman captured Caleb, and I know not what to do. His father has disappeared, too.”

Was there ever a street boy who did not know all the news? Abrim heard Sargon through, then exclaimed, “Adab? I saw him talking with Gaius at the wine shop this morning! Caleb’s father has been sent to the slave market at Cæsarea.”

Sargon cried out at this dire news. “The slave market! And his daughter? What of her? Do you know?”

Abrim nodded. “Yes. She and her mother were sent, too.”

The boys stared at each other for a moment. “What shall I do?” muttered Sargon, his face pale with dread. It was terrible to know that Caleb was in danger of being sent to Rome at any time; but to know that the delicate young Dorcas was likewise threatened was worse.

“Do?” inquired Abrim, ready of wit.

“Why, find Adab, and tell him to get together some of the traders that he knows around the city gate. Tell them what has happened! For gold they’ll take their men and effect a rescue.”

“Then what? My uncle dare not return to the city.”

“Is there no place else to go? Has your father not a home in Babylon?”

A thrill of joy went through Sargon. That was it! He would take his uncle to Babylon! There he would make a home for him and Dorcas!

Filled with hope he walked beside Abrim, questioning him for all the details surrounding the departure of Nahbi and his family; and in the course of their conversation he learned that Decimus, also, had left the city with his attendants, bound for Rome.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN.

The Slave Market

ZONINUS, that is not the way to fold a toga!"

The young man who was addressed turned with flaming face. "Have I not said that my name is Caleb?" he snapped. "And what care I whether the rag is folded correctly or not?"

Angrily he threw the garment to the floor and kicked it, while the one who spoke first glanced fearfully about to see whether or not the action had been observed. Quickly the latter lifted the garment, saying, "You are mad! Can you not make up your mind that your case is hopeless? What can you do?"

"What can I do? Can I not fight? Let me but have a chance, and I'll show this vile Roman, Decimus, that a free-born Jew cannot be made into a fawning slave!"

"Talk not so loud!" cautioned the other in a frightened whisper. "Talk not so loud! Do you wish to taste the lash?"

"Ha, ha!" Caleb laughed without mirth. "Do you think, Sextus, that the feel of the

lash is the worst that can befall me? Do you think that the memory of my father, my mother, and my dear sister are not worse lashes than any the *carnifex** can wield? Ah, I wonder what may have befallen them!" At the memories which his words evoked Caleb buried his face in his arm and wept.

One who had known the young man in earlier days might well have passed him without recognizing him, for his grief over his imprisonment and anxiety about his loved ones had drained the color from his formerly rosy cheeks and the flesh from his bones so that he looked like one who had been ill for a long time.

His appearance caused the overseer of the prison some concern, as the man had been informed that the young Jew was to be paired with another and that they were to be pages for a Roman patrician. What would the owner think if he came to claim the boy and found him in poor health? With this fear in mind the man had assigned Caleb to light tasks under the direction of Sextus, who was instructed to teach him such duties as he likely would have to perform in his future position.

*The slave whose duty it was to administer floggings.

Caleb's grief frightened Sextus. What if the overseer should come in and find the boy shaking with sobs? "Come, come, Zoninus," he begged. "If you fear not punishment, I do. Remember how much better your lot is than mine!"

Caleb looked up. "Why do you insist upon calling me Zoninus?"

"The overseer has so ordered. He wishes you to become familiar with the name before you go to Rome. Your mate's name is Zosimus; and for some reason you are to be called Zoninus."

"I'll not answer to it!" declared Caleb hotly. "How can you bear so tamely the treatment you receive? And the others? Why do you not rise up and free yourselves?"

"Hu-s-h! Do not let any one hear you! Do you not know the fate of rebels? And any suspected?"

Caleb shook his head.

"The *crux!*" (The cross.)

The slave looked all around to be sure that they were alone; then he warned Caleb to never have anything to do with a proposed effort to win freedom, telling him of cases wherein dozens, aye, even hundreds of slaves had been crucified for having raised their

hands against their master. Finding that they were not likely to be interrupted for a time, he went into details concerning a bit of slave history, which had been whispered from generation to generation, telling in bated breath of a rebellion following which twenty thousand slaves were crucified as a warning to others to submit tamely to their fate.

“ Oh, Zo—no, I’ll call you Caleb when we are alone!—whatever you do, hide your feelings! Smile! Submit! As a personal attendant in the service of an aristocrat you will receive many bits of money! Be clever, and speak compliments to your master and his friends! Nothing can be too exaggerated. I know, for have I not spent a lifetime among them? Such actions will bring much money for your *peculium*.^{*} Hoard it, Boy! Heap it up. Some day, then, you may buy your freedom!”

At that moment the overseer discovered the two idling. With a short command he sent Sextus to the odious task of grinding at the mill; but, no doubt fearing to punish Caleb lest he further his emaciation, he merely reprimanded the boy roundly.

^{*}Slaves had the right to save money, their accounts with their masters being known by this name.

Holding himself proudly erect, Caleb walked toward a far corner of the enclosure, where he threw himself upon the ground and gave himself over to dismal thoughts. How many weeks had it been since Decimus had captured him? How many had been spent in this loathsome place waiting to know his fate? He could not remember. One dreary day was like another, the only excitement or break in the tedium being the arrival of new slaves or the punishment of others.

Yesterday a huge consignment of men and women had arrived from the East; but as the enclosure was full to overflowing, they had slept in the open air outside the walls, closely guarded. Caleb had looked through the bars at them in sympathy, wondering how they felt to be chained together. Where were they from? Where were they going?

While the young slave was giving vent to his sorrow in the *ergastulum*, a solitary traveler was nearing the seaside city, sorrow of another kind making heavy his heart. This was Abraham, the publican, intent upon reaching his destination before Decimus should have left for Rome. As he traveled, he pondered all he had heard about or from the so-called Messiah; and the more he

thought, the heavier became his heart, for many deeds in his life would not stand consideration in the light of this man's teachings.

At the same time a woman with drawn face sat huddled against a wall, holding tightly in her arms the sleeping form of her daughter. It was Rachel, the wife of Nahbi ben Naph-tali. Anxiously she looked down at the beautiful pale face on her breast, pulling her garment up around the girl's ears to deaden the sounds which came from the crowd around them. Oh, if only the child could sleep like that forever!

From the sleeper Rachel turned her eyes toward the throng of unfortunates with whom she was associated. Some, it could be told at a glance, were newly captured into slavery, while others were resigned to their lot from long servitude and hopeless efforts to escape.

Beside her dozed a woman with a heavy band of metal around her neck. Rachel leaned over to see what it said, and with difficulty deciphered the characters that informed the reader that the woman was Chloe, and that she had run away from her master, Lucius Cornelius Sura. Below this informa-

tion was a request that he who read would hold the woman for her master.

Rachel shuddered. It was plain to be seen that the woman had at some time fled from her master and that this band was her punishment. Rachel and Nahbi, before they had been separated at the city gates, had whispered wild plans for escape, to which Dorcas had listened with hopefully parted lips, anxious to accompany them. Looking at the horrible band on the other woman's neck, Rachel involuntarily clasped her daughter closer, imagining her soft young throat chafed by a metal collar.

At the movement Dorcas stirred and sat up. "What are they doing, Mother?" she whispered, gazing toward the opposite side of the wide area, where a number of nearly-naked slaves were placing a low platform.

"I know not, Daughter," replied Rachel. "There has been much coming and going for some time now, and over there," she pointed, "is a group of men who have been moving around inspecting the slaves."

In the group she indicated were men of all nations, each most evidently having gold in his possession. There were slave dealers looking for beautiful maidens for Roman

and Greek masters; rich farmers and fruit growers seeking strong men and women for heavy labor; a scribe seeking an educated boy to assist him in his labors; a steward who had long been trying to find a deformed dwarf for his master's amusement. For such he would pay a stupendous price.

These men waited impatiently for the dealer who was to conduct the sale of slaves. It was not pleasant to their refined noses to remain long in this evil-smelling place! They glanced up when a splendidly dressed Roman arrived in a light chariot and took his position superciliously near the platform. He glanced haughtily over the other buyers and the crowd of chained men, women, and children, around him.

Hearing all the confusion in the market place, Caleb approached the bars and stood watching the movement outside.

At last the dealer took his position on the platform, and almost immediately his own slaves dragged forward a young Ethiopian and stood him on a great block on the platform. At the same time a scribe stood at his feet a *titulus* which had already been prepared for him.

Those who were interested in this piece of

human merchandise approached and read the brief history which was given for him. Evidently there was nothing objectionable, for two or three mounted the platform to inspect the ware.

At a sign from the dealer, the Ethiopian's single garment was jerked from his shoulders, leaving him naked except for his breech-clout. The purchasers felt of his muscles, poked at him to see if his flesh were firm, handled him as though he were nothing but a bale of goods. One of them looked around and motioned to a physician, who examined the fellow and pronounced him sound. Thereupon a spirited argument arose as to the price demanded. No one else was interested enough to make a bid; therefore, it was a matter between the buyer and the dealer alone. The slave was sent inside the *ergastulum* to await disposition.

Next came a Jew of heroic build. His muscles rippled under his bronzed skin in a way that denoted enormous strength. Caleb noticed that his ears were bored, indicating that he had been a slave for some time.

When this specimen was put on the block, the dealer placed on his head a cap which indicated to all concerned that the dealer was

not responsible in any way for the Jew's future actions. This was done when a slave was so rebellious that he was a menace to his owner, or when a slave repeatedly tried to escape or to commit suicide. Seeing the cap, the buyers were wary, but at last the young man was sold for a miserable price to a farmer.

"See, Dog," cried the dealer, striking the young fellow viciously with his *flagellum*. "By your perverse actions you have lost me money!"

"Dog!" snarled the captive. "Dog! Better that than be the vile swine that you are! Pah!" He spat contemptuously upon the dealer's robe.

At this the onlookers laughed and jeered the purchaser, expressing their opinions of the life he would lead with this rebellious slave in the household.

With a mighty shrug of his shoulders the young Jew cast aside the slaves who led him, and walked alone through the door of the prison. Inside he stared around like a captured animal until he saw Caleb, another Jew; then he made his way to the young man's side and stood beside him staring into the market.

One after another men and women were

placed on the block and disposed of. Some of the young women were decked in finery, with their faces painted according to the latest style, and their eyebrows penciled so that they would bring better prices. Caleb saw the women who attended to beautifying the maidens move from place to place preparing the wares for sale.

“Ah! A-h-h!” gasped Caleb suddenly, grasping the bars with both hands. “Ah! Father! Father!” he screamed, jerking at the bars madly. “Father! Father! Father!”

Yes, it was Nahbi who was being led to the block. At Caleb’s cry he looked up with a glad smile, but instantly remembering their dire circumstances, his face fell and tears came to his eyes. He moved as though to go to Caleb, but his attendants seized him and forced him to the platform.

None in the prison paid any attention to Caleb’s cries, for such outbreaks were of common occurrence. The newly arrived Jew looked with compassion upon the young man, but offered no comment other than a hoarse growl under his breath.

The *titulus* which was placed at Nahbi ben Naphtali’s feet recited his name and age, and a brief description of his business ability was

given in the hope that some wealthy man would buy him for the purpose of having him conduct a jewelry business for him.

While Caleb wept and struggled with the bars, Nahbi was sold and hurried into the prison until such time as seller and buyer could settle their score. Inside the door Caleb waited with hard-beating heart, ready to throw his arms around the beloved form, and with streaming eyes he and his father greeted each other. "Oh, Father, Father!"

"Caleb! My Son, my Son! Thanks be to Jehovah for this much, at least. I thought never to see you again."

"Perhaps He will send better things, Father," said Caleb hopefully.

"I have ceased to pray for it, my Son; yet He sends me you! I am shamed!" Then they drew aside to question each other and learn what had befallen since the night when Caleb fled from the Sabbath-eve table to escape the event which had at last overtaken him.

"And where are mother and Dorcas, Father?" asked Caleb.

"Ah, woe is me! Woe is me!" cried Nahbi who had for the moment forgotten. "Out there, waiting to be sold! Come, let us see!"

The sight which met their gaze when they reached the window brought a shriek of rage and woe to Nahbi's lips. Rachel, struggling wildly, her hair hanging around her pale face and her garments half torn from her body, was held by slaves to prevent her from reaching Dorcas, who was on the block, her face covered with her hands. At the time of her capture, Abraham evidently had taken thought of this very hour and had reserved her ornaments and garments for her embellishment upon the block, for she wore a magnificently embroidered garment that had been one of her prized possessions, and around her arms, neck, and ankles were bands of gold which had been hers from childhood.

Before the dealer could ask for bids, the Roman who had come in the chariot thrust his way forward, regarding not those whom he jostled. "Is that maiden the daughter of the jeweler, Nahbi ben Naphtali?"

In surprise the dealer looked at him, nodding an affirmative reply.

"How dare you place her on the block? Have you not been notified by him for whom she was seized, Decimus Julius, that she is reserved for me?"

“Decimus Julius? I have none here belonging to him! This maid is being sold for Abraham ben Izhar, the publican, of Jerusalem.”

“’Tis the same! He seized the family for Decimus, and Decimus gave me the right to purchase the girl at private sale! Away with her, Sir Dealer! She is mine! Put up another, for I wish a pair of them.”

Rachel stood breathlessly watching. Which would be worse, to have Dorcas put up for public bidding, or to have her turned over to the Roman?

The dealer refused to do as the Roman requested. “She belongs to the account of Abraham, and if you wish her, bid against the others. See, Men,” he cried, pulling the girl’s hands from her face, “see what an ornament she will be for any man’s home? What am I bid?”

Eager purchasers moved toward the platform, and Caleb had visions of his sister’s garments being torn, and her dear body subjected to the touch of strange hands. He was choked with emotion. Could he do something to save her? If he could, perhaps later he could purchase his mother and father from their masters.



"See what an ornament she would be to any man's home?"

Thoughts flew like lightning through his mind. If he could get away and lie in wait until darkness, he might aid Dorcas to escape, and together they would disguise themselves and try to reach Salomon ben Gershon, at Capernaum. Surely Salomon would aid them!

At the door the slaves on duty were unattractive, waiting for another from the outside to be thrust in. Outside, no one was near the door, all having crowded forward to watch the spirited bidding which would take place in order to secure this beautiful maiden.

“Father,” said Caleb softly, “I am going to fly! I must do something to save Dorcas!”

“Oh, my Son! What can you do? You cannot escape, and the effort will result in the lash, or worse!”

“I’m going to try!”

The newly arrived Jew had heard the words and had moved toward the door. His arms were loosely chained together, but not so that he could not use them with some freedom. He flexed his muscles as he approached the guards.

Nahbi clasped Caleb close to him. “Oh, Caleb! I’ll pray to Jehovah to aid you! I’d

given up all hope; but perhaps he will hear and send help! Farewell!"

Hoping to surprise the guards and slip past them, Caleb approached them cautiously, noticing with surprise that the newcomer was standing poised behind the larger of the two. The chained Jew motioned in a way that Caleb instantly understood that here was a friend; and without a word the young man darted forward.

At the same moment the chained Jew threw himself upon the nearest guard and kicked viciously at the stomach of the other, thus taking their attention from the door. Caleb slipped through, and Nahbi, his face pressed to the bars, saw him safely pass the nearest groups, only to be pursued by two men who realized that he was escaping.

It did not take the guards long to overpower the man who had assaulted them, and cast him upon the floor where they and their companions from outside kicked and beat him until he lay motionless at their feet.

As soon as he could draw near, Nahbi lifted the young man's head and wiped his face with the corner of his garment. "Why did you, a stranger, do such a thing? It was mad!"

The young man smiled slightly. His lips moved in a whisper to which Nahbi listened in amazement. "A man used to come to us where we labored, to tell us of the One Jehovah promised to send. He said that this One was here, and that he said we should do for each other what we would have others do for us. That's what I did! It was not much."

Nahbi sank slowly back on his heels as he knelt beside the stranger. The Promised One again! Was he to hear of that pretender wherever he went?

CHAPTER FOURTEEN.

The Feast

LEARNING that Decimus, whom many of them had known in former years in Rome, was to embark for home, his friends in the seaside city planned a farewell feast that should compare favorably with any such affair that their friends in the capital might arrange, and the garden of Publius Aemilianus was chosen because of its desirable location and privacy.

As soon as this was decided, messengers were sent to all possible places in the city to engage entertainers; for, as this was to be a feast for men only, there would probably be little conversation. Men must be amused!

From a wily Egyptian at the water front girl entertainers were engaged. From another man who had them, acrobats, and jugglers were to be sent at the desired time. Still elsewhere were found expert musicians, readers, and singers. Much to the delight of the host, there was found in a poverty-stricken waterfront inn a man skilled in the magic

of the far-south lands, who promised to perform for the guests.

The steward and the cooks ransacked all the markets in search of the dainties which the master felt he should serve his guests; and when at last they were finished, their larder presented a variety to bring a flush of pride to any cook's cheek.

To begin the feast, there would be sea-urchins, raw oysters, and several kinds of sea mussels. There would be a course including broiled thrush on asparagus, fat roast hens, panned oysters and mussels. Following this, the guests might have their choice of more shellfish, sea-nettles, loin of goat, pork in numerous ways, fried chicken, snails, and vegetables of kinds too numerous to list. Truly, the provisions were plentiful!

Publius listened to the reports of progress with satisfaction; then he went with his chief steward to the paved court. "Here," he said, pointing, "I want maidens stationed as statues with baskets of flowers, and behind each place a giant boy with lights. On this pedestal, where you will have the foot of the table, place the curly-haired Georgian with a shell of fruit, to represent Ganymede. Make an alcove in the shrubbery for the perform-

ers, and see to it that there be no mishaps to spoil the feast!"

Bowing humbly, the steward assured him that all should be sufficiently perfect to satisfy Cæsar himself.

"That will be well," said Publius, "for soon my friends will be feasting with Cæsar, and comparisons are odious! Let us give Decimus much to talk about when he reaches home."

To himself Publius named the expected guests. There would be Decimus, eight others, and himself, just enough for one table. Enough for a pleasant party, but not enough to make entertainment a burden.

On the day of the feast, which happened to be the one on which Caleb effected his escape, the guests arrived early, for they had been notified that this was expected.

Until it was time for refreshments to be served, the young men amused themselves according to their fancies. Some went to Publius' private court to play handball, the game being to bounce a soft ball against a wall and then strike it with the hand after it had fallen to the ground, causing it again to strike the wall. He who kept a ball in con-

tinuous motion for the longest time was winner.

Others, thinking this too strenuous, began a game of heads-and-tails. As it grew more serious one by one dropped out until Ancus proposed to Publius, "Do you offer the maiden you bought this morning?"

"Against what, Ancus?" calmly inquired the host.

"What you will. These," indicating the heap of coins and jewelry which he had won, "or the new chariot that just arrived from Rome."

One of the guests whispered to another, wondering why Publius did not speak the reproof that was deserved. Instead, Publius, not wishing to spoil the feast and dim Decimus' pleasure in the occasion, agreed. "I'll take you, Ancus, for the chariot. I have no doubt it is a beauty."

"Ha! It is, but not so beautiful as the maiden. Did you know that my steward was bidding against you?"

"No. As it was, I almost failed to secure her."

In reply to questions, Publius told that it had been necessary for him to bid in open

market for the slave that Decimus had said should be his.

"What?" demanded Decimus. "Would the dealer not believe that I sent you?"

"He said that the girl and her parents were to be sold for the account of one Abraham, a taxgatherer of Jerusalem. Such were his orders."

For a moment Decimus was speechless with rage; but it suddenly recurred to him that he had told Abraham to dispose of the family as he saw fit. He had forgotten all about it. "There has been a misunderstanding, Publius," Decimus said, "but I am glad you secured the girl."

"I bought her mother, also, so that the girl would not pine away and become a bag of bones," said Publius carelessly. "But come, Ancus, the girl against the chariot!"

Breathlessly the others peered over their shoulders when their hands were opened to display the coins, and exclamations broke upon the dusky air. "The chariot is mine, Ancus," calmly remarked Publius, placing his coin in his girdle. "And the girl!"

"Now, did the gods ever see such luck!" Angrily Ancus threw his coin with vicious

force. High it hurtled and flew swiftly downward to disappear in the shrubbery.

Immediately there was a cry of pain which caused Publius' slaves to hurry to see who was hiding there. Into the view of the surprised guests they dragged a young man dressed only in a tattered waist cloth, his skin torn by thorns, and his hair hanging over his eyes. One of the slaves rudely pushed the hair aside so that the new arrival's features could be seen, and Decimus exclaimed, "Why! He's my boy! How came he here?"

Caleb was dragged forward and questioned. He scarcely could talk, his voice being choked with tears that pride would not let fall, but from the little he did say the Romans gathered that he had followed his sister when she had been brought to the villa, hoping that he could escape with her.

"Well for me that you failed, Boy," declared Decimus, "else where would have been my gift for Albus? Take him away and see that he is properly clothed and cared for. Bathe his wounds, and make him presentable to travel with me."

Caleb was too disheartened to struggle as his captors led him past the table where the guests were already being seated; nor did he

look up when he passed two other persons who were approaching the court.

One of these persons was a runner who brought a tablet for Decimus. The other was Abraham, who had at last located the man he sought.

Decimus read the tablet and laid it on the table beside him; then he looked up curiously when a slave whispered that a man wished to speak with him. "May he come in?" Decimus did not wish to leave his friends at the table. Publius nodded.

"What? You?" exclaimed Decimus when he saw Abraham.

"Ay," replied Abraham, somewhat embarrassed. "I have a matter of much import to discuss with you, Decimus."

"Not of such import that my friends cannot hear it," replied the young Roman. "Speak out."

"'Tis about the family of Nahbi ben Naph-tali," said Abraham, somewhat at a loss to know how to express himself. "I intend to free the parents and the girl, and from you I wish to purchase the boy."

The Romans were staring at him in the light of the torches which made the scene almost as brilliant as day. This was a strange

proposition. "I fear you will fail, Jew," replied Decimus, helping himself to a great oyster. "The mother and daughter have been sold; perhaps the father. I know not, and as for the boy, I told you I had promised my friend Albus a gift from the east, and this boy is the gift! He is a splendid mate for Zosimus."

"Oh, Decimus, sell him to me! Other things there are to take as a gift, but I must have the boy!"

"Must!" Decimus spoke haughtily. "Must! You forget, Jew, to whom you speak?"

Abraham's distress was manifest. His face worked, and he twisted his hands together.

"Why is it so important, Publican, that you have this boy?"

"You would not understand, Decimus! It is a matter between my God and me."

The young fellows at the table laughed. Gods were plentiful in Rome, and it amused them to hear Abraham speak of this matter so seriously.

"See," said Abraham sadly, "you laugh!"

"And should we not?" inquired Decimus. "But come, tell us about it. You Jews take your God seriously, I must admit."

Decimus was thinking of the teacher he had heard in the distant hill country, and the way his words had impressed him. For a time he had forgotten just how much impressed he had been.

Hesitatingly Abraham told his story, telling how the carpenter, Jesus, had been a friend of a fellow publican; how he had taught such wonderful lessons; how he healed the sick and made the blind to see; how he wanted everyone to love his neighbor and to do good.

"A fine world it would be, Jew, if we all loved one another, wouldn't it?" jeered Decimus, flipping an olive seed at the motionless little Ganymede, making the child start and spill some of his fruit. "Yea, truly it would!"

The others had not interrupted the conversation, but all listened with interest. Nor did they speak while Decimus toyed thoughtfully with a flower. "I, too, Abraham, heard this man. He almost made me become a Jew." He paused at the sudden burst of laughter from his friends; then, remembering where he was, he continued coldly, "And as for the wonders he performs, there are others to do likewise. Did you not, Publius," he said to his host, "say you had a magician to perform for us? Let us have him in, to show Abraham

that this Jesus of his has competitors in wonder-working."

Publius accordingly gave an order to a page, and in a few minutes the magician appeared in the alcove opposite the table. While the slaves cleared the table for another course, the guests gave their attention to the wonders that were performed before their eyes.

A brazier of live coals was brought, and upon them the magician cast a powder that caused a dense blue smoke to ascend and hang heavily in the evening air. In this he caused the forms of birds, men, and animals to move mysteriously; then telling the young men that they might see in the smoke anything they desired, he waited for them to speak.

One by one they mentioned faces or scenes they wished to have brought to view, and to their boundless astonishment it was done.

"There, Jew," exclaimed Decimus turning to Abraham, "did you see anything more wonderful than that?"

Impressively Abraham advanced from the place where he had been standing in the background. "Ay, Decimus, I did." His tone

silenced the laughter. "Of a truth, I did. Something much more wonderful."

Abraham paused, gazing at Decimus. "This Jesus made a dead man arise, and walk! And today he lives!"

"What?"

"Impossible!"

"He must be a god, indeed!"

Of them all Decimus remained silent for a time. He had heard too many wonderful miracles this teacher had performed, and he had been too impressed by the teacher himself. Finally he said, "Truly, Publican? With your own eyes you saw this?"

"Truly, this man can be no other than the One whom our God promised us generations ago. In order that I may be fit to meet him and associate with him, I wish to right the many wrongs I have done. To the poor I will return all that I unjustly deprived them of. To the temple I'll send the tithes which I have withheld, and to Nahbi ben Naphtali I will return all his goods."

"If you can find him and buy back his family!"

The heartless words came from Ancus. "Publius, here, has the women. A woman who wins his eye will never be given up."

"Perhaps," replied Publius, trying to avoid a scene. "If Decimus gives up the boy, I'll give up the women."

The others laughed at the idea of Decimus being so foolish. Publius felt perfectly safe in making the promise. Decimus laughed with the others, though somewhat uneasily. He was more impressed than he wished his friends to know. No man likes to be jeered for his good intentions and impulses. He would be glad when he reached Rome, away from the disturbing influence of this strange teacher. He stirred and lifted the tablet which he had laid beside him. It offered him a pretext of getting rid of Abraham so that he could finish the feast.

"I have received word that my friend, Claudus, the centurion, has returned to Jerusalem. He has long been absent in the East, and I did not see him. I'll return to Jerusalem to spend a day with him before sailing, and while I'm in the city, Abraham, I'll consider the matter. Now, begone!"

Publius looked across the table at Decimus when Abraham had disappeared. "You do not believe his story, Decimus?" he inquired, rather than stated.

Decimus shrugged his shoulders in perplexity.

“You will not give him the boy?”

Again Decimus shrugged. “Not until I see a dead man walk!” he replied, dismissing the matter with those words.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN.

The Promise Fulfilled

A BRAHAM BEN IZHAR, disheartened by his conference with Decimus, made his way slowly to the city, revolving in his mind ways in which he might effect the re-establishment of Nahbi ben Naphtali's family.

As soon as possible in the morning he visited the slave prison, inquiring as to the purchaser of the jeweler; then, having learned this, he hurried to the eastern gate of the city, for, said the dealer, "He has been purchased by a speculator from Damascus, who hopes to sell him for a good profit. Be prepared to pay if you hope to secure the jeweler."

Abraham was prepared. He resolved that he would pay any figure which the speculator might demand; but fortunately the man was inclined to be reasonable as the profit came so quickly and he was relieved of transporting his new slave across the country.

Nahbi ben Naphtali was so affected by the happenings of the previous day that he displayed no interest in the matter, not even

looking up to see who had bought him. He was led from his place of confinement and through the streets toward Abraham's stopping place; but before the men had gone far, there was a shout and a rush of feet.

"There he is, Adab! Don't let him get away!" It was Sargon, who, with his Assyrian friend and several others had come in hope of rescuing the jeweler and his family.

A deftly-thrown rock struck Abraham on the head, rendering him unconscious so that he could not explain matters to his assailants. Before he regained his senses, Adab had seized Nahbi by the arm and hurried him away. "Ha, friend Nahbi!" he cried, embracing the jeweler in the exuberance of his joy. "You're free! Now, pray that we are as fortunate with your family!"

Adab was condemned to disappointment. He learned that Dorcas and her mother were safely guarded in the villa of Publius Aemilianus, while Caleb had been sent to some unknown place to be made presentable before embarking with Decimus and his future mate, Zosimus.

Already Decimus was on his way to Jerusalem in the fastest chariot he could find, knowing that if he wished to see his friend

Claudus and return to the port in time to board the galley which was to carry him homeward, he must travel rapidly.

For the various persons whose fate was more or less connected with that of Decimus, the days passed with differing degrees of slowness until the one of his proposed sailing arrived.

Having no doubt but that Decimus would arrive in time to board the vessel, his friends gathered to bid him farewell and give him messages for friends in Rome.

Caleb was brought to stand beside Zosimus to await the young Roman's coming. A splendid sight the two youths made as they stood dressed in rich garments, with thin fillets of gold binding their curls from their faces. More like aristocrats they looked, than slaves!

After a long wait Decimus appeared; but to the surprise of his friends, his face was not beaming with joy at the thought of embarking for home. Rather he was distraught. It appeared, too, that he had not his usual color. Was he ill?

Tossing the reins to his attendant, Decimus leaped to the ground with hands extended to his friends, who hailed him with hearty cries. As they moved around him, Decimus caught

a glimpse of Caleb and Zosimus standing motionless beside the plank leading to the galley; and instantly the expression on his face changed. He glanced uncertainly at his friends.

"Publius!" Decimus motioned to his recent host, drawing him aside. Thinking that Decimus had some important request to make, Publius waited to hear him. Instead, Decimus looked thoughtfully at the ground, as though trying to find words. At length he spoke. "Publius, I am not going."

"What?" His companion stared in surprise.

Decimus shook his head. "No. I—"

The other Romans had pressed closer, sensing that something unusual was about to take place. Decimus looked at them in embarrassment. What he was about to say would bring ridicule upon him, he knew. From one to the other he glanced. Ancus, Numa, all those who had been at the feast which Publius gave as a farewell to Decimus were here. "No, Publius. That has happened which changes my whole life, I fear. And I go not to Rome, not now, at least." •

There were exclamations of astonishment. "Come, Decimus," invited Publius, leading

the way. "Let us wait in the shade until they are ready to cast off."

Seating themselves on benches which an enterprising dealer had provided as an enticement for travelers, the group looked in anticipation at Decimus, hoping he would explain the mystery. Publius urged him to speak, and he began slowly.

"You all heard," Decimus began, "when I said I would give that boy," motioning toward Caleb, "his freedom when I saw the dead walk?" They nodded. "Well, he is free! I have spoken."

"Free?"

"Ha, ha. Decimus suffers from the heat! It's time he went upon water, where there are cool breezes!"

"No, I do not suffer from the heat, Ancus," denied Decimus. "Come closer so that strangers hear me not, and I'll tell you."

Ignoring a slight commotion which arose behind him, Decimus began a story which held his listeners breathless. "I found Claudus immediately upon my arrival in the city," he said, "but we had little time to visit, as he was about to go on the strangest duty, in truth, to which Roman soldier ever was sent!"

"What was it?"

Decimus glanced around. "He was going to the tombs to guard a dead man!"

He had expected surprise, and was not disappointed. "It is true. You heard the Jew publican tell of a teacher whose words had so influenced him that he wished to make right some of the wrongs he had committed? It was he who was dead. He had been betrayed by one of his trusted companions and put to death on charges made by people who surely did not know him!"

"But Decimus, why guard him? Was he so richly clothed in his tomb that they feared robbers?"

Decimus shook his head. "No. He was the poorest of the poor."

"Then, why in the names of the gods did the governor send his best man to guard him?"

"Why, the man had said that he would rise again from the tomb, and the priests had influenced Pilate to set a guard. They feared that the people would steal the body and then claim that the man had risen."

"The man was mad!" Publius laughed.

"No! He was right."

Had the occasion not be so serious, Decimus would have been amused at the looks which



"Publius, I am not going."

came to his friends' faces. They glanced at one another in consternation, wondering if Decimus, himself, might not be a trifle mad.

"Listen, Friends! Wishing to have as much time with Claudus as I might, I went with him while he stationed his men before the tomb, where a mighty rock had been rolled; then he and I sat beside a fire through the long hours, talking over old times and planning for the future.

"We saw the lights in the city below us disappear one by one, and listened to the noises of the city die away. It became silent, such a silence as I never experienced!

"Claudus told me the events of this man's end—how he had been harried from one authority to another and at last put to death on the cross, with two evildoers; and how he had been hurriedly laid away in this rocky tomb.

"It grew chill as we talked. We drew nearer to the fire, but it warmed us not. The chill was more than the night air! It was something that chilled our very bones. We became silent.

"Ill at ease, I sat staring at the huge rock which sealed the tomb, where a sentry paced. Of a sudden an icy blast struck me, causing

me to shiver. I feared, and you know it is not like Decimus Julius to fear!

“In the flickering light from our fires I saw the sentry glance uneasily around, as well he might! A form such as we are told the gods possess, only with a face like the blaze of lightning, stood beside the stone! His garments glistened like the snow!

“The sentry became as one dead, incapable of motion; nor could I move or cry out. I looked not toward Claudus. Before my eyes the stone rolled aside, which had been sealed! In the tomb the dead arose and walked! The one to whom I had listened, and who, his friends said, was the Son of God, lived again!” The face of the young man lit up with a strange enthusiasm.

“Many gods have I heard about in Rome! Gods of stone, who listened not when we prayed, but now I saw a living God! But for an instant only! For I fled, my heart frozen within me from fear, and at my heels came Claudus and his men. I know not what Pilate said to them, I waited not to see. Dawn had come, and I hastened away to do as I had promised.”

After a moment's silence, Ancus said, “And that is?”

Before Decimus could answer there were shouts in the narrow way which led to the waterside, and from it dashed a motley crowd of men at whose head was Adab, with Sargon close behind.

"There, Sargon," cried the Assyrian, brandishing a dagger. "There is Caleb! Fly with him while we hold back the Romans."

Into the fray which instantly arose Decimus thrust his way to address himself to Adab. "Put up your arms," he cried. "The boy may go with you! He is free!"

Adab stared with fallen jaw.

"Surely, Decimus," exclaimed Publius in amazement, "You do not mean it?"

"Ay, and you promised that when I freed the boy, you would free his mother and sister."

"Why—er—you know, Decimus that I believed you wouldn't do such a thing!"

"But I am. If you wish payment for the women, name your price. As for the boy, he is free."

There was a glad cry in the midst of the crowd, where Nahbi had been waiting, unseen, and the jeweler ran to embrace his son. They drew nearer at a sign from Decimus. "Boy," said the Roman, "you heard my

story? That your friend Jesus had been crucified, and that he now lives again?"

Caleb nodded in affirmation, while Nahbi looked stunned. This man that he had declared was an impostor, this man in whom his son and daughter had put so much trust, this man was the Promised One, after all!

Decimus continued. "Because of him, and a promise I made to my friends, you are free! Go your way. As for your sister and mother, all will be well. When you next see the publican, Abraham, tell him that I understand his desire now. Farewell."

With overjoyed hearts the father and the son walked away, filled with hope for the future.

Behind them Ancus turned to Decimus, "The boy is free? Where, then, Decimus, is your promised gift for Albus?"

"Listen, Ancus," said Decimus, coldly, "and you will hear." He motioned to Zosimus, to whom he said, "Boy, you will return to your master, alone. Remind him that I promised him a gift from the east. Give him this message, Say to him that I have found for him a living God! And this good news I send as my gift." He knew that he sent a gift such as no man had ever sent to a friend.

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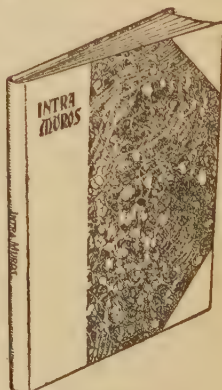
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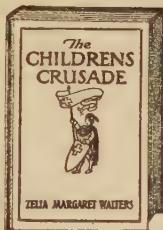
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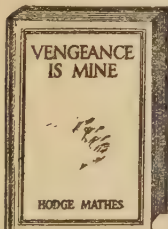
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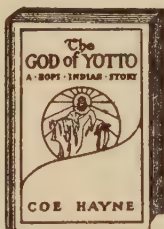
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